



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Jesse White's Teen Driver Safety Task Force Meets For Final Hearing In Chicago

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White's Teen Driver Safety Task Force held the third of three scheduled statewide public hearings in Chicago to examine teen driving laws and propose legislation and programs aimed at reducing teen traffic fatalities. The public meeting took place at the James R. Thompson Center.

"Recent studies have shown that the most comprehensive Graduated Driver License programs can reduce traffic fatalities for 16-year-old drivers by as much as 21 percent," White said. "Although our program already contains many of the components that are believed to reduce traffic fatalities for these young drivers, we want to make sure that we take every reasonable step possible to save more lives. These young people are our future leaders and we want to protect them so they have the opportunity to grow up and fulfill their aspirations."

The task force, comprised of legislators, traffic safety experts, law enforcement officials, educators and judges met in Springfield September 12 and in Carterville September 26. At the first hearing, White asked the members to consider a few changes to Illinois' GDL law including an earlier curfew and a longer permit phase in which the teen driver would need parental supervision. He also said he would like the committee to provide input for the development of a parent's guide that would include an overview of the Illinois GDL program, important issues to discuss with teen drivers, driving practice tips and a sample contract parents could have their children agree to before they get their drivers licenses.

The mission of the task force is to develop legislation to strengthen the Illinois GDL law in a manner that enhances the safety of young, novice drivers and reduces fatal crashes involving teen drivers. Members of the committee are examining Illinois' Graduated Driver License (GDL) law, other state's programs and recent studies that have concluded comprehensive GDL programs reduce teen traffic fatalities. The group is also studying proposals from various traffic safety organizations to improve teen driving laws.

A recent study released by Johns Hopkins' Bloomberg School of Public Health showed that GDL programs reduce by an average of 11 percent the incidence of fatal crashes among 16-year-old drivers. It also indicated that the most comprehensive programs can reduce fatal crashes involving 16-year-olds up to 21 percent. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people age 15 to 20. About 1,000 16-year-old drivers are involved in fatal crashes in the United States each year.

GDL programs are designed to delay full driving privileges while allowing beginning drivers to obtain their initial experience under low-risk conditions. There are three stages: a supervised learner's period, an intermediate license that limits unsupervised driving in high-risk situations, and a full-privilege driver's license available after completion of the first two stages.

White said comments and suggestions from the public are welcome. Comments and suggestions may be submitted in writing though the mail or on White's website, www.cyberdriveillinois.com. Those interested can also find more information about the task force, GDL programs and a summary of the current Illinois GDL law on the website.

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