



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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For More Information Contact:
Dave Druker
Henry Haupt

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White Touts Success of State's Stronger Teen Driver Laws *First Year Results in Over 40% Reduction in Teen Driving Deaths*

Secretary of State Jesse White announced today that teen driving deaths in Illinois dropped by over 40 percent in the first full year of the state's nationally heralded graduated driver licensing (GDL) law. In 2007, 155 teens age 16-19 were killed in automobile crashes. In 2008, 92 teens died in crashes.

"I am pleased that this law is working as we intended," said White. "The goal all along was to save lives. When I first convened the Teen Driver Safety Task Force nearly three years ago, we knew we had our work cut out for us. We knew that automobile crashes were the leading cause of death for teens. We worked hard and put together one of the best GDL programs in the nation. While too many teens are still dying on our roads, we can take some solace in the fact that 63 fewer teens died in crashes last year."

White made the announcement at a press conference at Taft High School in Chicago where he presented a Teen Driving Safety Award to Principal Dr. Arthur Tarvardian and driver education instructor Mike Hionis for Taft High School's outstanding driver education program. White emphasized the important roles that parents, high schools and driver education instructors play in preparing safe and responsible teen drivers. "We have formed a partnership between the Secretary of State's office, parents, schools and driver education instructors," said White. "Working together, we are saving lives and making our roads safer for all of us."

Illinois' GDL law, which was sponsored by Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) and Representative John D'Amico (D-Chicago), gives teens more time to obtain valuable driving experience while under the watchful eye of a parent or guardian, limits in-car distractions, and requires teens to earn their way from one stage to the next by avoiding traffic convictions. State and national traffic safety organizations have praised the law as one of the best in the nation.

"The good news that 40% fewer teens died on Illinois roadways in 2008 speaks volumes about the benefits of a strong GDL program," said Judith Lee Stone, President of the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, based in Washington, D.C. "I commend Secretary White for his efforts. Even considering reductions in driving due to the economic downturn, credit for saving lives can easily be given to recent improvements in Illinois laws that phase in full driving privileges for beginning teen drivers. Every state in the nation should follow Illinois' example by passing and enforcing strong, effective teen driving laws."

Joining White at Taft High School were stars from the latest *Disney on Ice* production currently playing in Chicago. The show, *Worlds of Fantasy*, incorporates characters from the Disney/Pixar movie *Cars*.

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