



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Jesse White Announces Teen Driving Deaths Down 56 Percent as this Week Marks National Teen Driver Safety Week

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety credit GDL laws for decrease in teen driving deaths

Secretary of State Jesse White announced today that teen driving deaths in Illinois dropped by 56 percent since Illinois' nationally heralded graduated driver licensing (GDL) law took effect in 2008. According to the Illinois State Police, in 2007 there were 146 teen driving deaths. Since the GDL law initiated by White took effect in 2008, teen driving fatalities have dropped to 87 in 2008 and 73 in 2009. Over the first nine months of 2010, the number of teen driving deaths has plummeted to 48, representing a projected decrease of 56 percent from 2007.

"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 in 2006, we knew we had our work cut out for us. We knew that automobile crashes were the leading cause of death for teens, and 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 fewer teens have died in crashes the last three years."

Illinois' GDL law better prepares novice, teen drivers by giving them more time to obtain valuable driving experience while under the watchful eye of a parent or guardian, limiting in-car distractions, and requiring teens to earn their way from one stage to the next by avoiding traffic convictions. State and national traffic safety organizations have praised Illinois' stronger GDL law as one of the best in the nation.

White made the announcement during National Teen Driver Safety Week at a press conference in Chicago where he presented the Teen Driving Safety Award 2010 to Harry D. Jacobs High School in Algonquin for their outstanding driver education programs. 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, students, schools and driver education instructors," said White. "Working together, we are saving lives and making our roads safer."

Jacobs High School was recently honored in San Diego, California by the National Safety Council with the Teen Driving Safety Leadership Award. They were the only high school in the nation honored with this prestigious award. Earlier this year, Jacobs High School received the 2010 Best of the Best Award in "Project Ignition," a national teen driver safety program sponsored by State Farm Insurance and coordinated by the National Youth Leadership Council.

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Illinois' GDL law, sponsored by Senate President John Cullerton (D-Chicago) and Representative John D'Amico (D-Chicago), has received national acclaim.

"It appears Illinois will see another welcome drop in the number of teens killed in car crashes by year's end," said Judith Lee Stone, president of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, based in Washington, D.C. "In addition to expected fatality declines during times of economic stress, Illinois' tough GDL laws have undoubtedly contributed to this improved picture. More teens are becoming better drivers on Illinois roads because exemplary, well-enforced laws are in place and statewide leaders, including key legislators and Secretary White, continue to promote the benefits of these lifesaving public policies. Every life they have saved is precious."

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