



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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Jesse White Encouraged by Reduction of Fatalities on Illinois Roads

Credits recent teen driving and BAIID laws as key contributing factors for lives saved

Secretary of State Jesse White credits two laws he recently initiated as key contributing factors to the reduction in traffic fatalities on Illinois roads in 2009. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in 2009 traffic deaths decreased nationally by 9.7 percent and alcohol-related fatalities dropped by 7.4 percent. The reductions were greater in Illinois, with traffic fatalities dropping by 13 percent and alcohol-related fatalities dropping by ten percent.

“Illinois has become a national leader in traffic safety on many fronts,” said White. “From our comprehensive teen driving program to our state’s cutting edge laws cracking down on drunk driving, we have worked to serve as a model for others to follow. While these statistics show Illinois is ahead of the curve nationally in reducing traffic fatalities, our work is not done. I am hopeful our most recent new laws that target excessive speeders, that ban texting while driving and that outlaw cell phones while driving in school and construction zones will help further contribute to an even greater reduction of traffic deaths in Illinois in 2011.”

White initiated a comprehensive teen driving safety law that took effect January 1, 2008. State and national traffic safety organizations applauded Illinois’ graduated driver licensing (GDL) law as one of the nation’s best. Since the law took effect in 2008, teen driving deaths in Illinois have dropped by over 50 percent. According to Illinois State Police, 146 teens died in traffic crashes in 2007. In 2008 the number of teen deaths dropped to 87. In 2009 teen driving deaths dropped to 71.

Partnering with the national office of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), White helped initiate a key law cracking down on drunk drivers. Effective January 1, 2009, all first-time DUI offenders who wish to obtain driving relief during the period of statutory summary suspension must install on their vehicle a breath alcohol ignition interlock device (BAIID). Motorists are required to blow into the BAIID, which measures their blood alcohol content level. The device is designed to prevent DUI offenders from driving after having consumed alcohol. MADD called this law one of the most important pieces of legislation Illinois has passed in years.

Last year White initiated legislation to strengthen the law on distracted driving by banning texting while driving and also banning the use of cell phones while driving in school and construction zones.

This year White initiated legislation targeting excessive speeders. The new law, effective January 1, 2011, will prohibit the issuance of court supervision to drivers ticketed for speeding 40 or more miles-per-hour above the posted speed limit. The measure also establishes as a Class B misdemeanor speeding violations of 30 - 39 miles-per-hour above the posted speed limit.

“The statistics released by NHTSA are encouraging and we can and should take some pride that our efforts have contributed to the reduction of deaths on our roads,” said White. “But we cannot become complacent. Until traffic fatalities in Illinois reach zero, we have work to do.”

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