



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

For Immediate Release:
February 17, 2011

For More Information Contact:
Dave Druker
Henry Haupt

Jesse White Encouraged by Reduction of Fatalities on Illinois Roads – Teen Driving Deaths Cut in Half
Credits recent teen driving, BAIID and distracted driving laws as key contributing factors for lives saved

Secretary of State Jesse White credits three laws he recently initiated as key contributing factors to the record low number of traffic fatalities on Illinois roads. According to the Illinois Department of Transportation and Illinois State Police, for the second year in a row fewer than 1,000 people died in vehicle crashes in Illinois.

White was also encouraged that teen driving deaths have dropped 50 percent since his teen driver safety law took effect January 1, 2008. According to Illinois State Police, 146 teens died in traffic crashes in 2007. In 2008 the number of teen deaths dropped to 87. Teen driving deaths then dropped to 73 in both 2009 and 2010. State and national traffic safety organizations have applauded Illinois' graduated driver licensing (GDL) law as one of the nation's best.

"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 roads have been made safer, 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."

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.

In 2009 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.

Last 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 traffic fatality statistics released by IDOT and ISP show that last year 923 people died on Illinois roads; in 2009 there were 911 traffic fatalities.

"The statistics released by IDOT and ISP are encouraging and we can and should take some pride that our efforts have contributed to a sustained 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."

###