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Jesse White's Legislation Strengthening GDL Law Approved by House

Requires people ages 18-20 who do not take driver education to complete a 6-hour training course before applying for a driver's license

Legislation proposed by Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White to further improve Illinois' heralded Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program was approved today by the Illinois House of Representatives. House Bill 772 – which now goes to the Senate for consideration – will require people ages 18-20 who skip driver education to complete a 6-hour driver training and education course before applying for a driver's license.

“Since we implemented one of the nation's most comprehensive GDL programs in 2008, teen driving fatalities have dropped nearly 60 percent,” said White. “But even the best programs can be made better, and this legislation will help strengthen our state's GDL program, and hopefully save more lives.”

Under current law, when a teen turns 18 – even without any driver education whatsoever – he or she may apply for and obtain a driver's license. In 2012, there were 31,979 driver's licenses issued to 18- to 20-year-olds. Of those, 16,494 did not take driver education. In 2011, there were 28,277 licenses issued to 18- to 20-year-olds. Of those, 14,043 did not take driver education. More than half of drivers ages 18-20 licensed in those two years alone did not have any formal driver training.

The six-hour driver training course will include a variety of critical traffic safety components, including instruction on traffic laws; highway signs, signals and markings; issues commonly associated with motor vehicle accidents such as poor decision-making, risk-taking, impaired driving, distraction, speed, not wearing a safety belt, driving at night, failure to yield the right-of-way, texting while driving, using wireless communication devices; and alcohol and drug awareness.

“One of my top priorities as Secretary of State has been to continually strengthen our state's GDL program,” said White. “This legislation will require a minimum of six hours of meaningful driver training and education for those who do not complete a high school or commercial school driver education course in order to obtain a driver's license.”

House Bill 772 was sponsored by state Rep. John D'Amico (D-Chicago).

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