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Secretary of State Jesse White's Trio of Traffic Safety Bills Signed into Law

Improves heralded teen driver safety program and further limits issuance of court supervision

A trio of key traffic safety legislative initiatives proposed by Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White was signed into law today by Governor Pat Quinn. The three new laws continue White's 14-year effort to make the roads of Illinois the safest ever.

"My mission as Secretary of State is to make the roads of Illinois as safe as possible," said White. "Since I took office in 1999, I have continually worked to improve traffic safety laws, particularly those laws aimed at better preparing and training teen drivers. While I am pleased we have seen a dramatic reduction of teen driving deaths by nearly 60 percent since 2008, we can never grow complacent in our efforts. These new laws will further improve road safety and help save even more lives."

Driver Training Course

House Bill 772, effective July 1, 2014, 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. 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.

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.

Kelsey's Law

House Bill 1009, named Kelsey's Law, takes effect Jan. 1, 2014 and will prohibit the issuance of a driver's license to a driver under 18 who has an unresolved traffic citation. This new law also allows White's office to cancel a GDL if it is determined that at the time of issuance the minor had an unresolved traffic citation. Under current law, a GDL applicant is not required to report any pending traffic citations. The law is named in honor of 15-year-old Kelsey Little, who in 2011 was seriously injured in an automobile crash by a young driver operating on a learner's permit. The driver was issued a traffic citation for the incident, of which the Secretary of State's office was unaware due to the lack of a reporting requirement. Three days later the teen driver applied for and was issued a driver's license.

Patricia's Law

House Bill 1010, named Patricia's Law, takes effect Jan. 1 2014 and will crack down on the issuance of court supervision for drivers involved in fatal crashes. Named in honor of Patricia McNamara who was killed in an automobile crash in which the driver received court supervision, the law will ensure that drivers involved in fatal crashes are ineligible for court supervision unless they have maintained a clean driving history. Under current law, drivers involved in fatal crashes may seek and obtain court supervision.

"I applaud Governor Quinn for signing these important traffic safety bills into law," said White. "While these three laws will help make Illinois roads safer, I will continue working vigilantly to improve programs and strengthen laws aimed at reducing traffic fatalities and injuries. Illinois has become a national leader in traffic safety and, in order to maintain this distinction, we cannot rest on our laurels."

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