



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 31, 2007

CONTACTS:

Abby Ottenhoff

312/814.3158

Gov. Blagojevich announces new requirements for teenage drivers, tough new penalties for drinking and driving in New Year

Effective January 1st, laws will set new learner's permit and cell phone requirements for teenage drivers, stiffen penalties for underage drunk drivers and DUI offenders trying to bypass interlock devices, and introduce DUI memorial markers

CHICAGO - Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today announced that five new laws created to ensure the safety of Illinois motorists will go into effect tomorrow, January 1st, 2008. These laws will create new learner's permit and cell phone requirements for teenage drivers, increase penalties for underage drunk drivers and DUI offenders trying to bypass interlock devices, and raise awareness of the dangers of driving while impaired by allowing relatives of DUI victims to request roadside memorial markers.

"These new laws will help keep our roads safer by making sure our youngest drivers are prepared to handle the responsibilities of getting behind the wheel and making sure that drunk drivers stay off the road," Gov. Blagojevich said.

Senate Bill 172, known as Jesse White's Teen Driving Bill, gives Illinois some of the strictest laws in the nation for teen drivers – including tripling the time for driving with a learner's permit from three to nine months. The package of measures is based on recommendations made by a Task Force on teen driving that was assembled by Secretary of State Jesse White in response to a series of articles in the Chicago Tribune about the dangers faced by teen drivers.

SB 172 tightens learner's permit and GDL requirements through the following:

- Extends learner's permit period from three to nine months.
- Extends nighttime curfews to drivers up to 17 years old (currently 16).
- Moves up the weekday curfew to 10 p.m. from 11 p.m. and to 11 p.m. from midnight on weekends. Exceptions are made if driving with an adult, to and from work or school, and emergencies.

- Doubles from six to 12 months the time during which a GDL driver, under the age of 18, may carry only one unrelated passenger under the age of 20, excluding siblings.
- Allows ticketing for all passengers age 15 to 20 for riding in the car driven by the new driver. (Currently only the driver is ticketed.)
- Requires student drivers to complete a full 6 hours of actual, on-the-street driving with a certified instructor. Currently up to 5 of the 6 hours may be substituted for other educational methods such as computer simulation.
- Requires that new drivers have 6 months violation free of driving with a GDL before the age of 18 before becoming eligible for an unrestricted GDL license. With the 9 permit months, that means 15 months violation free driving is required before becoming eligible for a full license.
- Establishes tough new sanctions for street racing and strengthens sanctions for repeat violations for any drivers under the age of 21.

SB 172 becomes effective January 1, 2008, except for the provision requiring six hours of on-the-street driving, which takes effect July 1, 2008.

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of fatalities among teenagers in the United States where nearly 1,000 16-year-old drivers are involved in fatal crashes annually. In Illinois, last year there were 151 fatal crashes that involved young drivers between the ages of 16 and 19. A total of 37 of those fatalities took place in Cook County.

In an effort to prevent teen-related driving accidents, **Senate Bill 140** raises the age at which a teen with an instruction permit or a graduated driver's license may drive while simultaneously talking on a cell phone, from 18- to 19-years-old. Exceptions will be made for emergencies. SB 140 toughens legislation the Governor signed into law in 2005 and is intended to reduce crashes caused by distracted teen drivers. The law ensures that all high school students holding a driving permit or graduated license are prohibited from using a cell phone while driving, even if they are 18-years-old.

House Bill 3131, requires the suspension of an underage individual's driver licenses for three months for transferring, consuming, or possessing alcohol. Offenders are penalized regardless of whether or not their alcohol offense occurred behind the wheel of a car, in a car, or near a car.

Senate Bill 585, increases penalties for individuals who try to bypass interlock devices. Interlock devices are installed on cars of DUI offenders and require the driver to pass a Blood Alcohol Content test by blowing into the device.

House Bill 1900, also known as "Tina's Law", allows relatives of DUI victims to request a memorial marker for any crash that occurred on or after January 1, 2003. The marker may memorialize more than one victim who died as a result of the same DUI-related crash as well as victims from DUI-related crashes in close proximity. The program is modeled after a similar 10-year-old Colorado program. This law aims to raise awareness of impaired driving by emphasizing the dangers, while giving families an opportunity to remember the victims. The DUI memorial markers will be a 36 by 24 inch blue sign with white letters reading, "Please Don't Drink and Drive." At a relative's request, a separate 36 by 18 inch panel reading, "In Memory of (victim's name)," followed by the date of the crash, will be mounted below the primary sign.