

## House Republican Press Release

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### An Overview of New Teen Driving Laws



by Rep. Vincent Candelora

Now that school is out, we will undoubtedly have more teenagers on the roads driving to work and enjoying the summer. Effective August 1, Public Act 08-32, An Act Concerning Teenage Drivers, will apply to all teenagers receiving their licenses. Generally, the law increases some of the licensing training requirements and enhances the penalties for teenage drivers. While this bill attempts to save lives, it is imperative that parents continue the dialogue of driving and passenger safety.

Statistically, the chances of an accident increases dramatically when passengers are in the vehicle of a teenage driver; therefore, the new act extends the phase in period for passengers. The Act limits the passengers of a vehicle operated by someone with a learner's permit to a parent, guardian or driving instructor. After receiving the license, a 16 or 17 year old may only transport a parent or guardian for the first six months. From six months to a year, the driver may transport a sibling along with a parent or guardian. Any person who violates this law will receive a 30 day suspension for the first offense and a six month suspension for the second.

The Act also doubles the training time behind the wheel from 20 hours to 40 hours. Parents are required to attend two hours of driving instruction for someone who is obtaining a learner's permit and who is less than 18 years of age, and the driving courses must include 2 hours of instruction of the statutes and penalties for those less than 18 years of age. The driving curfew also will drop from midnight to eleven p.m., with the exception that a teenager can drive after 11 if he or she is returning home directly from work or from a school or religious activity.

Statistically, teenagers and their passengers are among those least likely to wear seat belts. This new act requires that teen drivers not transport more people than there are seat belts installed in the vehicle and requires all passengers to wear seat belts with a teen driver. Violation of this provision is \$75 if you are under 18 years of age and \$15 if you are over the age of 18. Additionally, certain violations for teenage drivers have increased. Reckless driving and racing on a public highway will bring a 6 months suspension and a 1 year suspension thereafter. Speeding or use of a cell phone or mobile electronic device while driving will bring a 60 day suspension for the first violation, 90 days for the second and 6 months thereafter. It is important to note that this includes the

use of blue tooth devices. Teen drivers are not permitted to use blue tooth devices. Additionally, speeding has been redefined to include someone under the age of 18 driving at 20 miles per hour or more above any posted speed limit less than 65 miles per hour. Past law defined speeding as driving at a rate that endangers the life of any vehicle occupant or exceeding the posted limit on a highway at more than 55 miles per hour. Finally, the law imposes harsher penalties for anyone under the age of 21 who either refuses a blood alcohol test or is found driving under the influence. The penalties are as follows for a first offense, second offense and third offense, respectively: for a test refusal, 1 year, 2 year and 6 years; for a blood alcohol level of .02% to .16%, 180 days, 18 months and 4 years; and for a blood alcohol level of greater than .16%, 240 days, 20 months and 5 years.

If a teen driver is charged with any of these penalties, the police officer must immediately suspend the license for 48 hours, and for certain offenses, a parent must go to the police station and sign a release in order to get the license returned. This provision assures parents that they will become aware of their children's alleged violations.

Government must walk a fine line between protecting people's personal freedom and passing laws to protect the public's safety. I think there are parts of this law that people will like and parts that people will oppose, but all will agree that we must do more to educate our teen drivers in order to keep them safe on the roads. If anyone has further questions on these new laws, please call the House Republican Office at 1-800-842-1423.