



Jesse White unveils statewide distracted driving video during National Teen Driver Safety Week

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SPRINGFIELD - Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White unveiled a new distracted driving video marking National Teen Driver Safety Week, Oct. 21-27. The video, which was written, produced and feature high school students, was shown during a traffic safety event hosted by the Illinois Partners for Traffic Safety at the House of Hope in Chicago. The video will be distributed to high schools statewide to help address the dangers of distracted driving.

“The goal has always been to save lives,” White said. “We have seen teen driving deaths drop by more than 50 percent in Illinois, but there is still more work to be done. This video will make an impact on young people because it was written and produced by young people. It shows what can happen when you drive distracted. My hope is that it will make teens to think twice about picking up the phone while driving.”

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teens (15- to 18-years-old) in the United States, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The Journal of Adolescent Health reports 42 percent of teens text while driving. The video, which was produced by True Star Foundation After School Matters Summer Jobs Program supported through a State Farm grant, will be available to more than 6,000 driver’s education classes in Illinois.

More than 500 Chicago-area high school students attended the safety fair which included rollover and driving simulators, a golf cart driving range, motorcycle awareness presentations and a performance by the Jesse White Tumbling Team.

According to the Illinois Department of Transportation, since White's efforts to overhaul the state's graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws took effect in 2008, teen driving fatalities have dropped by 51 percent. Many cite White's nationally heralded GDL program for the dramatic decrease in fatalities.

Illinois' GDL program better prepares teen drivers by giving them more time to obtain valuable experience while under the watchful eye of an adult, limiting in-car distractions and requiring teens to earn their way from one stage to the next by avoiding traffic convictions.

White emphasized the important roles that parents, teachers and driver education instructors play in preparing safe and responsible teen drivers. State and national traffic safety organizations have praised Illinois' stronger GDL program as one of the best in the nation. To learn more about the state's GDL program, visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com. To watch the video, visit http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/drivers/teen_driver_safety/videos/home.html.

White is also reminding the public that this week is a time when parents and caregivers are encouraged to talk to teens about staying safe behind the wheel and avoiding distractions, alcohol, speeding and not wearing a seat belt.