

Giannoulas Announces New Laws To Take Effect Jan. 1

December 18 2023 9:43 AM



SPRINGFIELD - Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulas announced several new laws initiated by his office that will take effect at the start of the new year. The initiatives were passed earlier this year by the Illinois General Assembly and signed into law. They include:

Combating Distracted Driving

Giannoulas drafted this legislation to increase road safety by making it illegal to Zoom, watch or stream videos, or access social media sites while driving.

In 2022, more than 24,000 drivers were issued citations for distracted driving in Illinois. Nationwide, distracted driving kills more than 3,000 people annually, or about eight each day, according to the National Safety Council.

“We need to take steps to change the culture surrounding distracted driving, which will lead to more responsible drivers and ultimately save lives,” Giannoulas said.

“Videoconferencing takes hands, eyes and minds off the focus of driving. Our plan utilizes a combination of increased education, stronger laws and tougher enforcement to encourage drivers to change bad behaviors for the better.”

House Bill 2431 was sponsored by state Rep. Mike Kelly (15th District – Chicago) and state Sen. Javier Cervantes (1st District – Chicago).

Expanding Voter Registration for Teens

Under this measure, teens obtaining their driver’s license or ID card may preregister to vote at a Secretary of State DMV.

Giannoulas’ office initiated a measure to expand voter participation by allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to preregister to vote, so that when they turn 18 and are officially eligible to vote, they are already registered to do so.

“Voting is one of our country’s most cherished rights,” Giannoulas said. “I’m committed to increasing voter participation and voter access. This initiative ensures more young people register to vote and are eligible to vote at age 18.”

Senate Bill 2123 was sponsored by state Sen. Julie Morrison (D-29th District) and state Rep. Katie Stuart (D-112th District).

Preventing Book Bans

Giannoulas, who also serves as the State Librarian, initiated this first-in-the-nation legislation to prevent public and school libraries from banning books, guarding against censorship and protecting librarians.

Giannoulas proposed the legislation after extremist groups – including the far-right nationalist group, the Proud Boys – targeted Illinois libraries, divided communities and harassed librarians. The law authorizes state grant funding only to libraries that adhere to the American Library Association’s (ALA) Library Bill of Rights or that issue a statement prohibiting the practice of banning books or resources.

“The concept of banning books contradicts the very essence of what our country stands for,” Giannoulas said. “It also defies what education is all about: teaching our children to think for themselves. This landmark law is a triumph for our democracy, a win for First Amendment Rights, and a great victory for future generations.”

House Bill 2789 was sponsored by state Rep. Anne Stava-Murray (81st District – Downers Grove) and state Sen. Laura Murphy (28th District – Elk Grove Village).

Protecting Motorists’ Privacy

This first-in-the-nation legislation limits the use of automatic license plate readers (ALPRs) to protect individuals seeking abortion care. It also prohibits this data from being used to criminalize a person’s immigration status.

While ALPRs can be a valuable tool for law enforcement, the use of that data is currently unregulated. This puts innocent people in jeopardy of being prosecuted in other states for obtaining healthcare services that are legal in Illinois. Without regulation, it is impossible to know who shares this information or how it is used.

“No one seeking abortion care in Illinois should be harassed in any fashion, and I’m committed to enabling individuals to pursue and obtain the lawful healthcare they seek without government interference,” Giannoulas said. “License plate readers are an important tool for law enforcement – especially when apprehending suspects in violent crimes or recovering stolen vehicles in car jackings – but we need to regulate these cameras so they aren’t abused for surveillance, tracking the data of innocent people or criminalizing lawful behavior.”

House Bill 3326 was sponsored by state Rep. Ann Williams (11th District – Chicago) and state Sen. Sara Feigenholtz (6th District – Chicago).

Stopping Pretextual Traffic Stops

This legislative effort makes it illegal for police to stop motorists for items hanging from their rearview mirror, such as air fresheners.

Amending the current Illinois law – that prohibits items hanging from a rearview mirror because they obstruct a motorist’s vision – decreases unnecessary encounters over minor infractions, which can lead to violent confrontations between police and motorists.

“Pulling someone over for merely having an air freshener attached to their rearview mirror is not only archaic but ridiculous,” Giannoulas said. “Amending the law by prohibiting traffic stops that encourage discriminatory practices will ultimately make our streets safer for both motorists and police officers.”

House Bill 2389 was sponsored by state Rep. La Shawn Ford (8th District – Chicago) and state Sen. Christopher Belt (57th District – East St. Louis).

Increasing Library Access

This measure authorizes the office to negotiate with e-book and audiobook publishers to acquire digital rights to these materials at lower prices, which will make digital book resources more available to residents across the state, regardless of where they live.

“Libraries are the cornerstones of our communities, but due to technological advancements residents are no longer restricted to just brick and mortar buildings when they want to borrow a book,” Giannoulas said. “That’s why I advocated for the increased acquisition of e-books – so that readers can borrow more digital books from our libraries. Libraries can negotiate better prices from publishers when they work together.”

Senate Bill 2419 was sponsored by state Sen. Laura Murphy (28th District – Elk Grove Village) and state Rep. Nabeela Syed (51st District – Palatine).