

New Illinois Vehicle Laws Taking Effect In 2024

by Dalton Brown, News Reporter
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SPRINGFIELD - Several new laws concerning vehicles and driving are taking effect in Illinois starting on Monday, Jan. 1, 2024. Here's an overview of some of those laws regarding Zooming and driving, mirror accessories, and automatic license plate readers.

No More Zooming While Driving

In 2024, it will be officially illegal to attend Zoom meetings, stream your favorite show, and/or check your social media timelines while driving. If this already seems illegal to you, that might be because Illinois [already has laws](#) preventing handheld cell phone usage while driving; exceptions are made when reporting an emergency, stopped/parked on the side of the road, or when in park/neutral during a traffic obstruction.

This new law expands on that existing law to specifically target video conferencing, streaming, and social media platforms in an effort to further combat distracted driving. Illinois Secretary of State Alexi Giannoulias said in a press release that he 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,” Giannoulias 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).

Mirror Accessories Still Illegal, But Won’t Get You Pulled Over

Illinois drivers can no longer be pulled over by police solely because of items hanging from their rearview mirrors, including everything from air fresheners to fuzzy dice - though hanging such items from your mirror technically remains illegal.

State law already prohibits drivers from hanging items from their rearview mirrors due to visual obstruction, but Giannoulias said this new law aims to lower the number of “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,” Giannoulias 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).

Regulating Plate Readers, Protecting Privacy

The first of its kind in the nation, this new law regulates the use of data collected by automatic license plate readers (ALPRs). Giannoulas said the law aims “to protect individuals seeking abortion care” and also “prohibits this data from being used to criminalize a person’s immigration status.”

While Giannoulas acknowledged the value of ALPRs for law enforcement agencies, he added the use of the data they collect is currently unregulated. Without regulation, he claims it is “impossible to know who shares this information or how it is used,” which could put certain innocent motorists at risk - particularly out-of-state drivers who would otherwise face legal persecution for seeking legal abortions in Illinois.

“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 carjackings – but we need to regulate these cameras so they aren’t abused for surveillance, tracking the data of innocent people or criminalizing lawful behavior.”

The new law specifically prohibits ALPR users from selling, sharing, or transferring ALPR data except to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, except for “any state that has enacted laws that deny or interfere with a woman's right to choose or obtain an abortion prior to viability of the fetus, or when the abortion is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman.” It also restricts ALPR data usage to only “the extent necessary to locate a vehicle or person” reasonably suspected of being involved in a crime.

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