

# OPINIONS

**The News-Gazette**

**Editorial Board**

John Foreman, *publisher*  
John Beck, *executive editor*  
Tom Kacich, *opinions editor*  
Jim Dey, *editorial writer*

**EDITORIALS**

## New teen drivers face tougher rules

*A lot of thought went into new legislation intended to keep teenage drivers safe when they get behind the wheel.*

The Illinois General Assembly has passed tougher rules governing newly licensed teenage drivers, and it's fair to assume that the kids probably won't appreciate them very much, at least at first.

But the legislation, which is awaiting signature by Gov. Rod Blagojevich, has been drafted with teens' most important interest in mind — keeping them alive. Car crashes are the leading cause of death among adolescents, and the new law establishing an Illinois Graduated Licensing Program is designed to reduce the number of traffic crashes and fatalities.

The legislation follows on the heels of similar programs created in other states that have reduced fatalities among young people. Let's hope it has the same impact here.

The legislation creates a graduated licensing structure that will follow young drivers from 16 to 21, and it puts tighter restrictions on them including:

- Extending the driver's permit phase from three months to nine.
- Restricting nighttime driving to before 10

p.m. on weekdays and 11 p.m. on weekends.

— Doubling the period from six to 12 months that limits a teen driver to one unrelated teen passenger.

The legislation creates a series of hurdles that teen drivers must clear before they move on to the next phase of the graduated license process. Obviously, the farther along the process they are the more liberties new drivers are allowed.

This program was designed to confront head-on the circumstances that most frequently lead new drivers into trouble.

There are numerous circumstances that are common to tragic accidents involving young drivers — things like multiple teens in a car driven by a teen and late-night driving. This legislation is intended to reduce the frequency that those circumstances occur as well as increase the training that young drivers receive before they hit the road.

No piece of legislation will completely eliminate the problem. But it would be irresponsible not to try to identify circumstances that lead to the loss of young lives on our roads and highways.

Secretary of State Jesse White and state legislators deserve a round of applause for their work on this bill. Gov. Blagojevich should promptly sign it into law.