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Secretary White's Legislation Combating Texting While Driving Signed into Law
Bill passed House and Senate by wide margins

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White's legislation strengthening the law on texting while driving was signed into law by the governor. House Bill 4846, which takes effect July 1, 2019, cracks down on texting while driving by classifying first-time offenses as moving violations. Under the current law, which took effect in 2014, second and subsequent texting while driving offenses are treated as moving violations, while first offenses are treated as nonmoving violations.

"With the increased use of technological devices, distracted driving has become a serious problem on the roads of our state and throughout the nation," said White. "This important legislation will make our roads safer. No driver should be texting while driving."

The penalty for a violation of this law results in a moving violation that will be recorded to the motorist's driving record, as well as fines and court costs which will be determined by a judge. A driver who is convicted of three moving violations in a 12-month period is subject to a driver's license suspension.

The original law was based on recommendations made by the state's Distracted Driving Task Force chaired by White. The task force, which was created by Joint House Resolution 22, was charged with examining ways to reduce fatalities and injuries caused by distracted driving.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), driving a vehicle while texting is six times more dangerous than driving while intoxicated. NHTSA estimates that at least 25 percent of police-reported crashes involve some form of distracted driving. Texting while driving is considered among the most deadly forms of distracted driving.

House Bill 4846 was sponsored by state Rep. John D'Amico (D-Chicago) and state Sen. Cristina Castro (D-Elgin). The bill passed the House on April 18 and the Senate on May 29.

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