

News for Immediate Release

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Governor Corbett Signs Bill to Strengthen Teen Driver Safety and Training

Harrisburg - Governor Tom Corbett today signed House Bill 9, also known as "Lacey's Law," which will help junior drivers receive more comprehensive training, limit the number of passengers that junior drivers may carry, and make failing to wear a seatbelt a primary offense for junior drivers and passengers.

"Pennsylvania has made great strides in reducing teen-driving fatalities in the past decade but when it comes to the health and well-being of our children, we must go further," Corbett said during an event at Harrisburg High School. "I am joined today by family members of children we have lost and we all agree that 'Lacey's Law' is the next step in keeping our children safe when they begin driving on their own."

The new law specifically takes the following actions:

- Strengthens passenger restrictions for junior drivers. For the first six months after receiving a junior license, a driver under the age of 18 will not be permitted to have more than one passenger under

age 18 who is not an immediate family member unless they are accompanied by a parent or guardian. After six months, they may have up to three passengers under the age of 18, provided they have not received any violations or been partially or fully responsible for an accident. These restrictions apply until the junior driver turns 18.

- Increases from 50 to 65 hours the amount of supervised, behind-the-wheel training required for permit-holders under age 18. Ten of the added hours are for nighttime driving and five additional hours are spent driving in poor weather conditions.
- Changes the seatbelt requirements for drivers and passengers under the age of 18 to make the lack of seatbelt a primary offense, meaning the driver can be pulled over solely for that violation. The fine for conviction is \$75.
- Requires the Department of Transportation biannually compile and make public a report concerning junior drivers involved in an accident with multiple passengers under 18 years of age in the vehicle, the number of passengers under 18 in the vehicle at the time of the accidents and whether the driver and passengers used seatbelts. This data must be also included in a report submitted to the House and Senate transportation committees.

The legislation is named for Lacey Gallagher, 18, from the Philadelphia area, who was killed in car crash on April 28, 2007. She was a passenger in an SUV with six other teenagers. All of the other teens were injured;

none wore seat belts.

“Teen drivers out there may feel that they are being singled out by this bill and, the fact is, they are. Each of our children, like Lacey Gallagher, represents our future, our hopes and our dreams. We are not ready to give them up to a needless accident and we support this bill because we care so much for them,” said Corbett.

Accordingly to a study done by the Institute for Highway Safety in 2005, the incidence of car crashes for junior drivers rises incrementally with the number of passengers in the car.

The governor thanked Rep. Kathy Watson (R-Bucks), Sen. John Rafferty (R-Chester), Sen. Tommy Tomlinson (R-Bucks), and the leadership of the House and Senate transportation committees for their work on this legislation.

Learn more about driver licensing and young-driver safety at the Department of Transportation’s website, www.dot.state.pa.us.

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