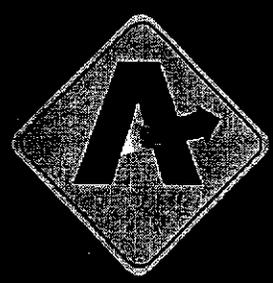
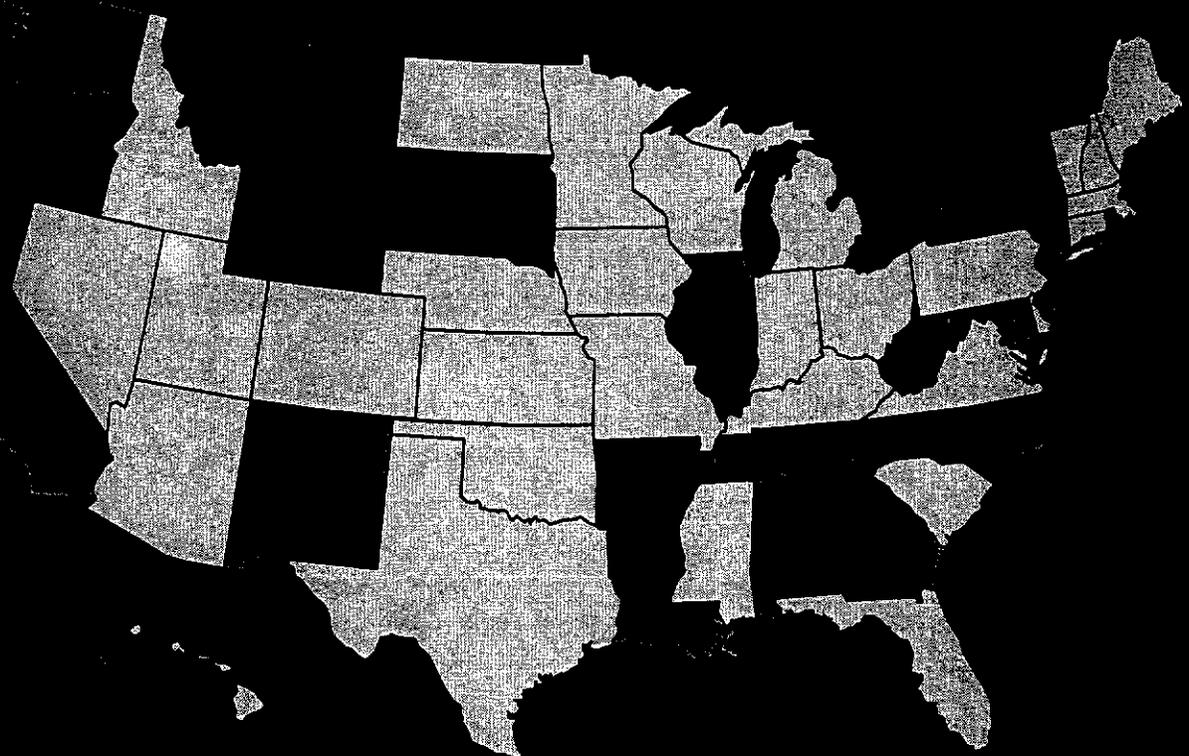


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# 2005 ROADMAP TO STATE HIGHWAY SAFETY LAWS

*Roadwork Ahead:*  
The Unfinished Safety Agenda



**ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
AND AUTO SAFETY**  
[www.saferoads.org](http://www.saferoads.org)

December 2004

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) is pleased to publish our second *Roadmap to Highway Safety Laws*. This report evaluates all 50 states and the District of Columbia (DC) on their progress in adopting critical highway safety laws identified by Advocates as necessary to reducing the tragic toll of deaths and injuries caused by motor vehicle crashes.

Advocates applauds state legislative action any time it leads to better laws; however, in the past year only a handful of states have advanced the highway safety agenda. The constant drumbeat of nearly 43,000 fatalities and 3 million more injuries at an annual cost exceeding \$230 billion year in and year out emphasizes the urgent need to accelerate adoption of proven life-saving laws. With motor vehicle crashes being the leading cause of death for our children and young adults, too many safety bills languish in state legislatures and too many dangerous gaps still exist. Our *2005 Roadmap Report* clearly identifies those states that need to work harder on their primary enforcement seat belt, all-rider motorcycle helmet, teen driving, booster seat and impaired driving laws. Experience teaches us that public policy solutions are known in the form of effective laws; unfortunately what is often lacking is the political will to act.

The publication of the second *Roadmap to State Highway Safety Laws* is accompanied by the release of Advocates' 2004 Lou Harris public opinion poll regarding state legislative issues. Yet again, public opinion strongly supports the need for action by state elected officials. Since 1996, five Lou Harris public opinion polls conducted by Advocates consistently have shown the public is squarely behind adoption of laws and policies that result in lives saved and injuries avoided. In nearly all cases, 4 out of 5 Americans support adoption of state laws to improve highway safety.

One troublesome trend occurring in communities across the country is in the growing number of teen driving deaths and crashes. Since September, in the National Capital Area alone, 17 teens have been killed in car crashes involving inexperience, alcohol, speed and late night driving. These tragedies are not unique to this region. Unfortunately, progress in the adoption of optimum graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws has been incremental at best. Not a single state has adopted Advocates' four requirements for an effective GDL law despite the growing number of teen driving deaths and the irrefutable research supporting legislative action. As parents, communities, and elected leaders grasp for ways to better protect new teen drivers, it may be that additional strengthening measures need to be enacted beyond even Advocates' criteria. These include increasing the supervised driving time with an adult before granting full licensure to new teen drivers and imposing meaningful nighttime and passenger restrictions.

Inaction by states imposes an unnecessary and unacceptable personal and financial burden on families and state budgets. The *2005 Roadmap to State Highway Safety Laws* can be a catalyst for state action. Governors, elected officials, community leaders, and families need to make enactment of highway safety laws a priority in the 2005 state legislative sessions. The public cannot afford to wait any longer. On behalf of Advocates, I urge each state that does not have the safety laws defined in this Report to work post-haste with elected officials to stem the tide of deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes.

*Judith Lee Stone, President  
December 2004*



# TEEN DRIVING

## *Give Teens More Time to Learn*

### **50 States and DC Still Need An Optimal GDL Program**

Motor vehicle crashes are the number one killer of American teenagers.

Teen drivers are far more likely than other drivers to be involved in fatal crashes because they lack driving experience and tend to take greater risks due to their immaturity. According to NHTSA, young drivers (16 to 20 years old) were involved in approximately 1.6 million, or 26 percent of all automobile crashes (6.3 million) in 2003. Additionally, 8,984 people were killed in crashes involving young drivers. Of that number, 3,723 of those killed (41 percent) were the young driver.

National campaigns to increase seat belt use sponsored by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) and NHTSA place specific emphasis on teens and young adults who are the least likely to buckle up and the most likely to die in a motor vehicle crash.

Graduated driver licensing (GDL) programs introduce teen drivers to the driving experience gradually by phasing in full driving privileges over time and in lower risk settings, and have been effective in reducing teen driver crash deaths. In this report, Advocates has defined what it believes to be the optimal GDL program, making specific recommendations for each of the four components of GDL.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins University and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) have found that passenger restrictions for young drivers could save hundreds of lives

each year. If 100 percent of teen drivers drove alone, rather than driving with other young passengers in the vehicle, 275 lives could be saved each year.

California's GDL program includes a complete learner's stage and a passenger restriction law. Teenage passenger deaths and injuries resulting from crashes involving 16-year-old drivers declined by 40 percent statewide from 1998 through 2000, the first three years of the program.

Also, Oregon's GDL program, which includes the optimal learner's stage and a passenger restriction law, has been effective for male teen drivers. According to NHTSA, those who completed the GDL program experienced 16 percent fewer crashes during their first year of driving than those male teens who had not received their license under the GDL system.

A 2001 Lou Harris Poll showed 92 percent supported a 6-month holding period and 95 percent supported at least 30-50 hours of practice driving with an adult. 74 percent supported passenger restrictions and supervised driving at night. Support for these provisions was surprisingly high among 18-20-year-old respondents.

On the following page, the four major provisions of a GDL program are explained. In this report, each provision is counted as its own law. To date, no state has all four optimal provisions recommended by Advocates.

#### ***Advocates' Recommendation:***

**All 4 of the optimal GDL provisions listed on the following page should be adopted by every state to reduce teen deaths and injuries.**