



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

School's Open -- Drive Carefully!

JOHN J. FLANAGAN

It's that time when millions of children across New York State will put away their bikes and swimsuits, and head back to school. This is an exciting time for many boys and girls as new experiences and challenges await.

It's also a time for increased vigilance and awareness by all New Yorkers. With schools back in session, local streets will be filled with school buses and children rushing to them.

Tragically, thousands of students are seriously injured or killed by automobiles in New York State each year. We can all help make student safety a top priority this back-to-school season.

Drivers should remember to use extra caution *and slow down* when approaching a school or a school bus. Remember, that is is unlawful to pass a stopped school bus in either direction when its red lights are flashing. If you see a vehicle pass a stopped school bus, you can report it to local police by using [this form](#).

Parents, be sure to remind children of a few simple tips:

**Look right, left and then right again before crossing a street;*

- *When getting off a bus, always look to the rear of the bus before you step off the bottom step;*
- *Take five large steps straight out the door and out of the "danger zone;"*
- * Keep eye contact with the driver, and wait for his signal before you cross in front of the bus;*
- * Never go back for anything left on the bus; and*
- * Never bend down near or under the bus.*

The safety of our children is one of my top concerns. The state Senate has acted on a number of measures to reduce school-related injuries, including bills that would:

- * Create training standards for all school bus drivers, require refresher courses and make school bus drivers and attendants subject to background checks;
- * Prohibit drivers with a history of drunk or impaired driving from working as a school bus operator;
- *Require mandatory breath tests for school bus drivers who are involved in accidents;
- *Require a two-year suspension of any bus driver convicted of an alcohol- or drug-related crime;
- *Make it a crime to board a school bus without authority, and
- *Require drivers to check for any remaining students after their route is finished.

Working together, we can make this school year the safest yet, and give our students the best chance to learn and grow.