



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

## Senate Passes Package of Bills to Make New York's Roads Safer For Motorists And Their Families

ANDREW J. LANZA May 15, 2018

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*Senator Andrew Lanza (R, Staten Island) said, "Our teens are at risk every time they get behind the wheel as evidenced by the troubling fact that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers. This package of bills will create awareness, and ensure that New York State implements the best possible safety and supervision measures so that our teen drivers keep themselves and others safe."*

### **Measures Include Creation of a New Commission to Prevent Teen Motor Vehicle Accidents, and Increase Enforcement and Penalties for Reckless Drivers**

The New York State Senate today passed a package of bills designed to prevent motor vehicle accidents and acts of unlawful driving, and make New York's roads safer for motorists and their families. The measures require a new study of distracted driving and other causes of teens' accidents, increased penalties and enforcement for reckless drivers who endanger schoolchildren or construction workers, preventing staged accidents and insurance fraud, as well as those who repeatedly drive unlicensed.

Senator Joseph Robach (R-C-I, Rochester), Chair of the Senate Committee on Transportation, said, "Today, I was proud that my colleagues in the Senate supported common sense legislation that will make roads safer across New York State. Whenever someone uses roads anywhere in the state, we want to ensure that they are as safe as possible for all. The pieces

of legislation that were passed today aim to make certain that those who choose to break traffic laws are sufficiently punished and that we take proactive measures to increase traffic safety for schools and students on buses. As Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee, I will continue to lead the fight to make New York's roads the safest in the nation."

### ***Preventing Distracted Driving by Teens and Adults***

Recent findings suggest that motor vehicle crashes are higher among 16- to 19-year-olds than any other age group. A bill (S2632), sponsored by Senator Andrew Lanza (R-C-I, Staten Island), creates the "Teen Driver Safety Commission" to examine and review the issue of teen driver safety. This legislation creates a 12-member commission to study the availability and effectiveness of driver education and training programs in New York, as well as a selection of driver education and training programs offered throughout the United States. The commission will also:

- Review the impact of distracting behaviors while driving;
- Survey and assess the problems of driving under the influence and aggressive driving among teens;
- Determine the type of motor vehicle violations that are most often associated with accidents involving teen drivers;
- Analyze and provide measures that may mitigate the risks associated with the operation of motor vehicles by teen drivers; and
- Report all findings and conclusions to both the governor and the legislature to help form effective public policy.

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In addition to this measure, Senator Robach today hosted a districted driving demonstration and media briefing in the Legislative Office Building in Albany in partnership with AT&T as part of a nationwide “It Can Wait” campaign. The virtual reality experience allowed demonstration participants to witness firsthand the dangers of distracted driving. The event also included a memorial complete with a wall of keys that represent lives lost to distracted driving, and a wall made to look like crushed car parts.

**Other measures passed today include:**

***Protecting Kids on School Buses and in School Zones***

S1064A, sponsored by Senator John Bonacic (R-C-I, Mount Hope), increases penalties for those who recklessly pass a stopped school bus on multiple occasions. The legislation would help protect children going to school by suspending a driver's license for a period of 60 days when the driver is convicted of passing a stopped school bus twice in 18 months – a similar punishment under current law for repeat speeders in construction zones.

S6212A, sponsored by Senator Lanza, helps to deter dangerous drivers from committing traffic infractions and traffic misdemeanors in a school traffic control zone by doubling fines for these offenses. By creating harsher penalties for those would put children at risk in a

school zone, this measure will create incentives for drivers to abide by the laws and reduce the amount of vehicle and traffic incidents.

### ***Increasing Safety on all New York Roads***

S421, sponsored by Senator James Seward (R-C-I-Ref, Oneonta), creates new criminal penalties for those who engage in staged accidents – the intentional act of causing a vehicle collision to commit insurance fraud. Aside from the fact that this illicit activity poses a serious public safety risk, the economic cost of staged accidents is staggering, with no-fault insurance fraud estimated to cost insurance companies and their policyholders \$1 billion per year. This bill would impose tougher punishment on those who stage accidents, thereby deterring individuals from engaging in this dangerous crime.

S258, sponsored by Senator Robert Ortt (R-C-I, North Tonawanda), establishes the crimes of vehicular assault and vehicular manslaughter in an active work zone. The legislation creates newer, tougher penalties for injuring or killing a construction worker and would help serve as a deterrent to driving carelessly in a construction zone. It also builds upon the “Work Zone Safety Act of 2005,” which increased penalties for speeding in work zones, allowed police presence and radar speed display signs in work zones, and created a system for reviewing safety and design in work zones.

S1258, sponsored by Senator Carl Marcellino (R, Syosset), increases safety on New York’s roadways by making it easier to prosecute those who repeatedly drive unlicensed. This legislation helps to ensure offenders of aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle may be charged in the second degree when they have two or more suspensions for failure to answer, appear, or pay a fine. Under current law, the offenders must have had three such

suspensions to be prosecuted for aggravated unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle in the second degree.

S1188, sponsored by Senator Marcellino, closes a serious loophole in traffic law by toughening penalties for those operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license in a parking lot. This legislation would ensure serious legal ramifications for these types of offenders by applying the “parking lot as a public highway” interpretation of traffic law, which currently only pertains to DWI-related offenses. Currently, if a driver with a suspended license causes a serious accident in a parking lot, they could face no serious legal ramifications.

The bills will be sent to the Assembly.