



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie Joins Colleagues in Calling for Improved School Bus Safety

BRIAN DWYER June 12, 2018

| ISSUE: **SCHOOL SAFETY**



State Senator Patty Ritchie joined her colleagues today to call for the passage of a bill that would allow school buses to install stop-arm cameras to detect and record vehicles illegally passing stopped school buses. The bill, ([S.518-B](#)), which is cosponsored by Senator Ritchie, would permit evidence taken from the cameras to be used in issuing tickets to violators.

“Whether they are driving distracted or simply ignoring the laws, we have a significant problem with reckless drivers failing to consider the safety of our children when they approach school buses with red lights flashing and warning signs extended,” Senator Ritchie

said.

“From the statewide study, to a survey I conducted right here in our region, the numbers are alarming. We must do more to protect our children and this bill will hopefully get drivers to think about their decisions behind the wheel, before they make them.”

Studies have estimated that more than 50,000 drivers throughout New York State—on a single day—illegally pass a stopped school bus.

Last year, 365 bus drivers from 31 different local school districts across our region took part in a survey Senator Ritchie created to document this ongoing problem. They reported back, that over the course of five days, there were 600 instances of drivers illegally passing a stopped school bus in Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties.

As part of that survey, a majority of the bus drivers said they supported the installation of cameras to buses to capture images of vehicles illegally passing them. They also supported increased penalties for illegal passers and increased fines for those who illegally passed a bus while using a cell phone or other electronic device.

This bill discussed at today’s press conference is one of many dedicated to improving school bus safety that Senator Ritchie has either supported or sponsored. Those bills include:

- Increased penalties when death or serious injury occurs as a result of illegally passing a stopped school bus ([S.5733](#), sponsored by Senator Ritchie);
- Increasing the penalties for drivers caught passing buses while using an electronic device ([S.5898-A](#), sponsored by Senator Ritchie);

- Institutes a school bus safety component to driver education courses ([S.5974](#), cosponsored by Senator Ritchie);
- Suspending the driver license when a person is convicted of passing a school bus two or more times with a 10-year period ([S.1064](#), cosponsored by Senator Ritchie);
- Stiffer penalties for those who pass school buses, also requires an individual who injures someone while passing a bus be charged with aggravated vehicular assault and if a person is killed after passing a bus, that driver would be receive a charge of criminally negligent homicide ([S.1023](#), cosponsored by senator Ritchie);
- A measure doubling the penalty for passing a stopped school bus—currently \$50 to \$400 for first offenses, and up to 30 days in jail—while driving a heavy truck ([S.5897](#), sponsored by Senator Ritchie); and
- A measure that provides for the permanent disqualification of school bus drivers who fail a random alcohol or drug test in certain cases ([S.5865](#), sponsored by Senator Ritchie)

All of the above measures have been approved by the Senate.

RELATED LEGISLATION

2017-S518

- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly

- In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
- On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
- Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
-

Authorizes the installation and use of photo monitoring devices on school buses to detect and record vehicles illegally passing or overtaking a school bus

January 03, 2017

In Assembly Committee

Sponsored by Catharine Young

Do you support this bill?