

House Republican Press Release

July 31, 2008
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Hamzy: New Teen Driving Law Takes Effect today; Will Help Reduce Serious, Fatal Accidents

Law Might Have Prevented Fatal Route 6 Accident Last August that Took Lives of Four Teens



A horrific fatal accident on Route 6 in Bristol that took the lives of four young people last August and injured three others might never have occurred if a new teenage driving law that took effect Friday, August 1st had been on the books in 2007, state Representative William A. Hamzy said today.

The new law (Public Act 08-32) increases the amount of behind the wheel, on the road training 16- and 17-year olds must complete before qualifying for a drivers license; sets tougher mandatory drivers license suspensions for 16- and 17-year old drivers who violate certain traffic laws; and extends the passenger restrictions that formerly applied to 16- and 17-year-olds after they are licensed from the first six months after being licensed to a full year, said Representative Hamzy, R-78th District.

“As a long-time supporter of tougher driver training and licensing standards for teenage drivers, a parent and a commuter who drives by the scene of last year’s fatal accident on Route 6 on my way to work, I was especially pleased when Governor Rell signed this measure into law in April,” said Representative Hamzy, a cosponsor of the legislation. “Young drivers with limited experience behind the wheel are involved in more motor vehicle accidents than any other age group and automobile accidents are the leading cause of death among adolescents – not only in Connecticut but elsewhere in the country as well.”

“The new law significantly expands the amount of supervised, on-the-road training required of Learners Permit holders from 20 to 40 hours. It also requires them to complete an eight-hour safe driver course,” Representative Hamzy said. “In addition, 16- and 17-year old drivers are required to adhere to certain restrictions to help prevent distractions that can lead to accidents for the first year they are licensed. These are major changes in the law that will help young, newly-licensed drivers master essential safe driving skills and avoid developing bad habits that could threaten their lives, the lives of their passengers, and the lives of others on the road as well.”

Under the new law, 16- and 17-year old drivers who are licensed after August 1, 2008 cannot drive between the hours of 11 p. m. and 5 a.m. unless they are traveling for employment, school, religious activities, medical necessity, or if they are assigned drivers in the Safe Ride Program.

During the first six months, newly-licensed drivers may not have any passengers in their vehicles except:

- A licensed driving instructor giving instructions.
- Their parents or legal guardians, at least one of whom must hold a valid driver's license.
- One person who is providing instruction and is at least 20 years old, has held a driver's license for four or more consecutive years, and whose license has not been suspended during the four years prior to training.

During the second six months (months seven through twelve), the only additional passengers allowed in the newly-licensed driver's vehicle are members of the driver's immediate family.

In addition, 16- and 17-year old licensed drivers may not:

- Transport more passengers than the number of seatbelts in their vehicles.
- Operate any vehicle that requires a public passenger transportation permit, or a vanpool vehicle.
- Use a cell phone (even if it is hands-free) or a mobile electronic device while driving.
- Transport any passenger on a motorcycle for six months after the issuance of a motorcycle endorsement.