

# New teenage driving limits backed

## Earlier night-driving restrictions proposed

By [Ted Gregory](#)

January 10, 2007

SPRINGFIELD - A state task force created to strengthen teen driving laws in Illinois formalized its proposals Tuesday, and legislative leaders on the panel said they plan to introduce bills when the legislature convenes in February.

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White's Graduated Driver Licensing Task Force adopted nearly all of the proposals unanimously or with little debate in a two-hour meeting in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

But members said a couple of proposals—one aimed at motivating teens to keep a clean driving record; the other imposing earlier night driving restrictions—could face complications.

"This is democracy at work in the best way, to draft legislation," state Sen. John Cullerton (D-Chicago) said after the meeting.

The main recommendations of the task force include:

Tripling the length of time a teen driver must hold a learner's permit from the existing 3 months to 9 months.

Starting a night driving restriction at 10 p.m. weekdays and 11 p.m. weekends, an hour earlier than current curfews for 16- and 17-year-old drivers.

Doubling to 12 months the passenger limit for newly licensed young drivers and allowing for the ticketing of passengers who exceed passenger limits. Existing state law allows only one passenger younger than 20 who is not an immediate family member.

Requiring public schools to provide a full six hours of instructor-supervised street practice in driver education.

Requiring 15-year-olds with learner's permits to log nine months of conviction-free driving and 16- and 17-year-olds to drive conviction-free for six months before restrictions on their licensing would be removed.

Requiring parents to attend court hearings when 16- and 17-year-old drivers request court supervision for a violation; prohibiting mail-in supervision; requiring attendance at a traffic school for teenagers younger than 18 to receive court supervision for a traffic violation.

Create a committee to update driver education.

"It's going to be our responsibility to get these passed," Cullerton said, "and there's no better lobbyist in Springfield than Secretary of State White."

But Cullerton acknowledged that the proposed earlier night driving restrictions would draw formidable opposition from legislators who believe parents in their districts object to being forced to shuttle their kids to and from events that run past the proposed night driving restrictions.

Once those parents understand that fatal teen driving crashes soar after 9 p.m., those parents probably would change their minds, Cullerton said.

There are also potential hurdles for the proposals to require that 15-year-olds with learner's permits drive for nine months conviction-free and that 16- and 17-year-olds drive for six months conviction-free before they can progress to the next, less-restrictive licensing phase.

Champaign County Circuit Judge Jeff Ford, a task force member, said too many drivers are receiving court supervision, a disposition not recorded as a conviction if the errant driver obeys terms of his or her supervision. Many drivers cited for moving violations seek and receive several supervisions instead of convictions, a tactic that could circumvent the requirement for teens to keep a clean driving record, Ford said.

White created the 27-member task force in August, in part as a response to the Tribune's yearlong series, *Teens at the Wheel*, examining the problem of teen driving crashes.