



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TIME TO BRING BACK DRIVER'S EDUCATION

Every day we are off to our morning destination—work, school, or other location. Chances are you will hear an often-repeated phrase from those who made it to the destination safely, “I have never seen worse drivers in my lifetime.” There is an abundance of bad drivers across the state and nation, and depending on where you live it may be even worse. Every time I get behind the wheel I say a silent prayer, “Dear Lord, please don’t let me be run over by the idiots today and keep me and others safe.”

Many remember when driving a vehicle was a privilege, first granted to us by our parents and then recognized by those who issued a license. Likewise, driving a car is not a right promised to every person, but rather a privilege granted to people who complete certain requirements.

In the legal arena, even the US Supreme Court says that citizens do not have a fundamental “right to drive.” In *Dixon v. Love*, 431 U.S. 105, 112-16, 97 S.Ct. 1723, 52 L.Ed.2d 172 (1977), the Supreme Court held that a state could summarily suspend or revoke the license of a motorist who had been repeatedly convicted of traffic offenses with due process satisfied by a full administrative hearing available only after the suspension or revocation had taken place. The Court conspicuously did not afford the possession of a driver’s license the weight of a fundamental right. See also *Mackey v. Montrym*, 443 U.S. 1, 10, 99 S.Ct. 2612, 61 L.Ed.2d 321 (1979); *Bell v. Burson*, 402 U.S. 535, 539, 542-43, 91 S.Ct. 1586, 29 L.Ed.2d 90 (1971).)

Tennessee does mandate that to get an Intermediate Driver’s License, a minor must have certified 50 hours of supervised behind-the-wheel experience, including 10 hours at night. The Tennessee Department of Safety only requires students to complete a driver’s education course if they have been convicted of multiple moving violations while they are operating on their intermediate restricted license. It is time to reevaluate that policy.

It is currently not a requirement for a minor child to obtain a permit or license to complete a driver’s education course. Nobody disputes that it is an important resource that can help students become responsible and safe drivers. *Should we restrict student access on our school campuses until they can prove to be responsible and safe drivers? Should driver’s education courses be required? How can we prove or truly verify the supervised behind-the-wheel or night experience?*

From a school safety perspective, school district policy could *require* a student to pass a driver’s education course before being allowed to drive to/from school or park their vehicle on school grounds. This class could also be offered during the summer or through any of the legitimate driving schools across the state. Many school districts abandoned driver’s education due to liability concerns, and some states quit paying for the

SUMMARY

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programs. Some insurance companies discontinued offering premium discounts for driver's education. Many programs today also consist of only watching online videos and never actually getting on the road.

[Research](#) from Nebraska in 2015 demonstrated that young drivers who have not completed driver's education are 75 percent more likely to get a traffic ticket, 24 percent more likely to be involved in a fatal or injury accident, and 16 percent more likely to have an accident. The objective should not be to just save parents a few dollars on auto insurance, it must be to improve driving, reduce accidents and injuries and ultimately save human lives. We all benefit by learning defensive driving techniques and other safe driving skills that will last a lifetime.

The rules of the road are also shifting. We all face obstacles in an increasingly challenging driving environment, especially with more inexperienced drivers on the roads. Texting and driving are one of the most distracting items a driver can do. Phone use – particularly calling and texting – while driving is one of the most common distractions. We have gone hands-free to some extent, but daily we witness drivers with a phone to their ear weaving in and out of traffic. The police do not have time to pursue every driver. Along with new technology advances in automobiles there comes an even greater impediment for distracted drivers. Technology in vehicles is not always to our benefit. “Infotainment,” dashboards GPS maps, and other hands-free technology may impede smart driving and safety. Multitasking technology is about convenience, not safety.

Good driving habits require training and repetition. Teen crashes and fatality rates are highest at ages 16-18. However, a driver’s education course is a beneficial choice for drivers of any age and experience level. Driver’s Education should be required for all minors navigating our roads. It is time to strengthen our driver safety policies. Lives most certainly will depend on it.

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