

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Signs Graduated Driver's License Law

Gov. Christie Whitman today signed legislation to provide teenagers with more driving experience before obtaining a driver's license.

The bill, **S-318**, creates a graduated driver licensing system that requires a teenage driver to hold a learner's permit for one year, and a provisional license for one year, before becoming eligible for an unrestricted license at age 18. The bill also places restrictions on the holders of these licenses.

"The sad truth is that many automobile accidents and fatalities involve our young drivers," said Gov. Whitman. "This new licensing system will ensure that teenagers are given adequate training, so they are prepared to face the challenges and responsibilities of driving."

Currently, a person may apply for a learner's permit at age 16, provided he or she is taking a behind the wheel driving education course. A person with a permit must be accompanied by a driver over age 21 when driving and cannot drive between the hours of 12 a.m. and 5 a.m.

The new system expands the restricted times to prohibit driving between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m. and allows as passengers, in addition to the required 21 year old driver, only persons who reside with the permit holder and one additional person who does not reside with the permit holder.

At age 17, a person who has completed the permit requirements and six months driving experience, and has passed the road test, may apply for a provisional license.

The provisional license prohibits driving from 12 a.m. and 5 a.m. and allows only one additional passenger, who does not reside with the permit holder, in addition to persons who share the permit holder's residence. However, this restriction does not apply when at least one passenger is over the age of 21.

Persons who are 17 years of age, but under 21, who apply for an examination permit to take the road test must be accompanied by a driver at least 21 years of age who has been licensed for at least three years. These drivers are subject to the same restrictions on passengers and driving times as a provisional licensee for the first six months.

Examination permit holders over 21 are subject to three months of supervised driving by a New Jersey licensed driver at least 21 years of age who has been licensed to driver for at least three years.

The law establishes penalties for permit holders and provisional licensees who accumulate more than two points, are convicted of a drunken driving offense, an accident involving injury or death, or violation of any other motor vehicle law.

For all categories of licenses, the law raises the age to obtain a basic driver's license from 17 to 18.

The sponsors of the bill were Senators Robert Singer (R-Burlington/Monmouth/Ocean) and Joseph Palaia (R-Monmouth) and Assembly Members Joseph Malone and Melvin Cottrell (R-Burlington/Monmouth/Ocean).

Gov. Whitman also signed the following pieces of legislation:

S-709, sponsored by Senator Robert Littell (R-Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris) and Assembly Members Scott Garrett and Guy Gregg (R-Sussex/ Hunterdon/Morris), extended the comparison phase of cross-acceptance of the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan from four months to six months.

S-715, sponsored by Senators Robert E. Littell (R-Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris) and Peter A. Inverso (R-Mercer/Middlesex) and Assembly Members Barbara Wright (R-Mercer/ Middlesex) and Guy R. Gregg (R-Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris), establishes a 26-member School Transportation Study Commission to review New Jersey's school transportation system. The commission will investigate the advisability of alternative systems of providing school transportation and the advisability of alternative systems, including a regionally-based transportation system. The commission will also study issues including courtesy busing, safety busing, special education busing and nonpublic school busing.

The commission will include the Commissioner of Education and 17 public members and will issue a final report within six months of its initial meeting.

S-893, sponsored by Senator Robert Martin (R-Essex/Morris/Pasiac) and Robert Littell (R-Sussex/Hunterdon/Morris) and Assembly Member Carol Murphy (R-Essex/Morris/ Passaic) and Tom Smith (R-Monmouth), allows court appointed competency evaluations to take place at jails or prisons and requires DHS to commit certain persons with criminal backgrounds to certain designated hospitals. The legislation, which is based upon the report of the Governor's Task Force for the Review of the Treatment of the Criminally Insane, is intended to increase public safety, the safety of state hospital employees and the security of mental health facilities.

S-894, sponsored by Senators Robert Martin (R-Essex/Morris/Passaic) and Louis Bassano (R-Essex/Union) and Assembly Members Jim Holzapfel (R-Monmouth/Ocean) and Marion Crecco (R-Essex/Passaic), makes participation in prescribed treatment programs a condition for release on parole for mentally ill patients. This bill clarifies that inmates who are mentally ill must participate in their prescribed treatment programs while incarcerated in order to be eligible for parole. It is part of a package of four bills that was recommended by the Governor's Task Force for the Review of the Treatment of the Criminally Insane.