



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Suzi Oppenheimer

Senate Passes Broad Legislative Package to Enhance Traffic Safety and Save Lives

SUZI OPPENHEIMER May 16, 2011

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Senator Suzi Oppenheimer (D-Mamaroneck) is pleased to announce Senate passage of a package of bills aimed at making the roads safer for pedestrians and motorists across the State. The six-bill package increases vehicular safety measures, while strengthening the penalties for those who violate traffic safety laws.

These include a measure that would establish texting while driving as a primary offense, allowing police officers to stop and issue a summons for unlawful texting. (S.998B). Under current law, a motorist can only be ticketed for texting while driving if he or she has already been stopped for another traffic violation.

Other traffic safety measures included in the legislative package would:

- Prohibit the use of any device that affects the operation of a traffic control signal; if the unauthorized use of such device causes personal injury or death, the violation would be charged with a Class E felony. (S. 1208).
- Increase the penalties, including a mandatory 60-day suspension for multiple violations, for passing a stopped school bus. (S. 3099A).

- Increase the penalties for theft of a motor vehicle when a child is present in the vehicle. (S. 1543).
- Prohibit the disruption of a funeral procession by making it illegal for a motorist to force his or her way into the line of a procession. (S. 3022).
- Allow greater judicial discretion to withhold conditional licenses for motorists charged with driving while intoxicated. (S. 526A).

A recent study conducted by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that more than half of all motorists feel less safe on the road today than they did five years ago. “This is due in large part,” said the Senator, “to the proliferation of distracted drivers who talk on cell phones, text, send and read emails – all while operating a motor vehicle.”

“Public safety demands that we respond with new laws that keep pace with ever changing technology. Millions of New Yorkers take to roads each day and we must ensure that our traffic laws make sense and are followed. I firmly believe that by making penalties stronger and empowering police officers with the means to enforce these laws, we will improve traffic safety and save lives,” concluded Senator Oppenheimer.

“I urge you to contact your Assembly member to request that they act quickly to approve these bills and prevent further traffic tragedies.”