



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Stephen M. Saland

## Senate Passes Package of School Bus Bills

STEPHEN M. SALAND February 6, 2012

| ISSUE: **FAMILIES, TRANSPORTATION, CHILDREN, YOUTH**

*Bills intended to make riding bus safer for students, enhance communication, and make “school bus” signs more economical*

The New York State Senate today passed a series school bus bills that will ensure child safety and enhanced communication.

A bill was passed that increases the penalties for passing a stopped school bus (S.3099A). The legislation would impose a sixty day suspension of a driver’s license if convicted of passing a stopped school bus two or more times.

This legislation would make the penalties for passing a stopped school bus multiple times the same as penalties for drivers convicted of speeding in a construction zone two or more times.

The Senate also passed a bill, sponsored by Senator James Seward, that would give school districts the option to put their website on their school buses (S.2371). Currently, school districts are only permitted to affix their phone numbers on the rear of the school bus, but with advancements in technology and communication, some school districts have created websites which have become an increasingly important tool for communication.

A third school bus bill was also passed by the Senate relating to “school bus” signs. Currently, school bus signs are required to be illuminated, but this legislation would allow for the signs to be constructed with reflectorized materials. The bill, sponsored by Senator Charles Fuschillo, is intended as a cost-saving measure while still supplying the necessary safety precautions (S.4488A).

Advancements in technology have made the illuminated sign requirement on school buses obsolete. Existing technology for photo-reflectorized coatings and graphics similar to those used on traffic signs will allow for signs to be made economically, with industry-standard materials, and offer advantages beyond the illuminated signs.

The current required illuminated signs are more expensive, both initially and to maintain. New York is one of only two states – the other being Maine – that require this feature. Additionally, these lights accumulate snow and ice and are often times found to be the source of water leaks and leading to structural corrosion. Both of these negative externalities can now be avoided with the use of reflectorized coatings and graphics.

The bills have been sent to the Assembly.