



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senate Passes Package of School Bus Bills

James L. Seward

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ALBANY, 02/06/12 – The New York State Senate today passed a series of school bus bills that will ensure child safety and enhanced communication.

A bill, sponsored by Senator James L. Seward R/C/I-Oneonta), that would give school districts the option to put their website on their school buses ([S.2371](#)) was among those receiving approval.

“School districts are increasingly using the internet to communicate important information to students, parents and district residents,” said Senator Seward. **“Allowing schools to print their website addresses on buses is part of the natural evolution of providing that information and will help open the communication lines between school districts and community members.”**

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.

The bill is completely voluntary and was inspired by the Greenville Central School District, in Senator Seward’s district, which requested the change

The senate also passed a bill, sponsored by Senator John Bonacic 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.

"It is the responsibility of each and every adult to protect and ensure the safety of children," said Senator Bonacic. "Unfortunately, there are individuals who are careless, putting their priorities above the safety of children, making this legislation necessary. This amendment to current law is designed to further reflect the severity and danger in passing a stopped school bus. It's an obvious and necessary precaution we need to take."

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.

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](#)).

“Reflective technology provides the same safety benefits as an electrically lit ‘school bus’ sign at a lower cost. At a time when every dollar counts, school districts should be able to utilize this technology to reduce their costs. This legislation would allow them to do that, and I am pleased that it has been passed by the Senate,” said Senator Fuschillo, Chairman of the Senate’s Transportation Committee.

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.