

Legislation would tighten restrictions on teen driving
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Just days after Secretary of State Jesse White proposed legislation to toughen teen driving rules, state Sen. Bill Brady unveiled an even tougher bill on Friday.

But while Brady, R-Bloomington, is the legislation's sponsor, the authors are the parents of a Tremont teen who was killed in a car accident in September 2005.

Randy and Cathy Waddell approached Brady, their state senator, with a list of teen driving reforms after their 15-year-old daughter, Ashley, was killed while riding in a car with two friends.

The 16-year-old driver, who had only had his driver's license for eight days, was driving 96 miles an hour when he lost control and crashed into a tree, said Randy Waddell. All three were killed instantly.

"We felt the reason the accident happened was lack of experience," said Randy Waddell. "So we felt like they needed to have more practice or training before (teens) actually got their license."

The legislation, called the Ashley Marie Waddell law, would do exactly that - if passed, it would dramatically toughen the requirements needed for a teen to obtain a driver's license.

Under the bill, a teen would have to hold a learner's permit for a year - four times the current requirement - before becoming eligible for a license. Only five other states have a permit phase that long.

The proposed law also would require teens to log 150 hours of parent-supervised driving time before receiving a license; Illinois requires 50 hours now. Parents who falsely claim their child has met this requirement would receive a \$1,500 fine and have their license suspended for three months.

Other provisions include requiring a teen be at least 15 years old before receive a permit, forbidding teens from driving at night during the first six months they have a permit, and requiring that a permit-holder can only drive with a parent, guardian or a person who is at least 21 years old and has five years of consecutive driving experience.

Brady also is co-sponsoring White's legislation, which incorporates the

recommendations of White's Teen Driving Safety Task Force. That bill, also sponsored by Sen. John Cullerton, D-Chicago, would extend the permit phase to nine months and extend the driving curfew for 16- and 17-year-olds, among other things. It does not include any of the restrictions on permit drivers that are proposed in Brady's bill.

Brady said White's proposal "will be the main thrust" to reform Illinois' teen driving rules. But both Brady and Cullerton said that legislators might attempt to add on some of the Waddells' ideas to White's bill.

The Waddells' proposals, Brady said, are "not unpassable, but some are difficult" - particularly the 150 hours of parent-supervised driving time.

"That works out to about 30 minutes a day for a year," Brady said. "That's a lot."

White spokesman Randy Nehrt said the Waddells had testified before the task force, and many of their proposals were considered.

However, Nehrt said task force members had "concerns that 150 hours wouldn't be passed by the General Assembly." The nine-month permit phase proposed by the task force was a compromise between advocates of a 12-month phase and a six-month phase, he said.

While White will continue to push his legislation, Nehrt said "he's always open to any improvements that can be made along the way" as it moves through the legislature.

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