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MADIGAN, ATTORNEYS GENERAL NATIONWIDE DEBUT AD CAMPAIGN TO STOP TEEN TEXTING BEHIND THE WHEEL

Attorney General, Secretary of State Jesse White Urge Illinois Schools to Educate Teens on Dangers of Texting & Driving in Driver's Ed, Health Classes

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today joined with Secretary of State Jesse White, state attorneys general nationwide, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Ad Council to unveil a new public service campaign to address a rising number of injuries and deaths caused by teens texting while driving.

As part of the new campaign, www.stoptextsstopwrecks.org, Madigan and Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White today called on schools around the state to incorporate the new public service announcements in their driver's education and health classes to spread awareness among teen and young adult drivers.

"Texting' and 'teenager' are almost synonymous, but that is a dangerous combination behind the wheel," said Attorney General Madigan "Thousands of Americans die each year from distracted driving and many more are injured. Because teens are the least experienced drivers on the road, they are especially vulnerable to accidents."

"As chairman of the state's Distracted Driving Task Force, I made it clear my top priority was to draft and enact legislation banning texting while driving in Illinois on all roads for drivers of all ages," Secretary White said. "This important traffic safety law went into effect January 1, 2010. Nobody has any business composing or reading a text message while driving, and this PSA will help further raise public awareness of the dangers of texting while driving."

The new campaign stems from a settlement reached by Illinois and other attorneys general in 2002 with Ford Motor Company and Firestone Tires over the risk for rollover in sport utility vehicles. Over the last decade, settlement funds have been used for PSA campaigns to educate the public about risks associated with driving. As texting and driving accidents and fatalities have become more prevalent, the multistate group has turned its focus to this new danger.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports distracted driving is the No. 1 killer of American teens. Sixteen percent of drivers younger than 20 who were involved in fatal crashes were reportedly distracted while driving. The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute reports that a texting driver is 23 times more likely to get into a crash.

Participating in the campaign along with Madigan are attorneys general nationwide and from the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. The campaign includes TV and radio PSAs and messages on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. They aim to reduce the alarming number of teens and young adults – 82 percent – who admit to reading texts while driving, as discovered by the Ad Council in a new national study.

The Ad Council's new survey, which was also released today, found that while 82 percent of young adult drivers said they have read a text while driving, 75 percent have sent a text from behind the wheel and 49 percent have done so multiple times. Half of respondents said that during the past month, they have been a passenger when a friend was texting while driving.

The campaign's PSAs were created pro bono by the New York agency The Concept Farm, and communicate to teens and adults that when you text and drive, you are not multitasking, but essentially driving blind. By taking your eyes off the road, even for a few seconds, you are making the road less safe for you, your passengers and other drivers.

"For over 25 years we have been working with NHTSA to successfully address drunk driving prevention. The term 'designated driver' is now a part of the American vocabulary, but even more importantly 67 percent of all adults have tried to stop someone

from drinking and driving,” said Peggy Conlon, president and CEO of the Ad Council. “Research has shown that using a cell phone delays a driver’s reactions as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent. Through our Texting and Driving Prevention campaign we are working towards eradicating the mindset among young adults that texting and driving is a safe activity.”

Since 2006, Madigan and the attorneys general have partnered with the Ad Council to address reckless driving among teens. To date the campaign has received more than \$88.7 million in donated media support. The new PSAs will run and air in advertising time and space that is donated by the media.

In his tenure serving Illinois as its Secretary of State, White has made it his priority to implement safe-driving measures to ensure the safety of our roads and reduce the number of fatal accidents among teens in Illinois.

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