

*Response to the Press of AC Editorial  
Young Drivers/Ditch the Decals  
dated Sunday September 11, 2011*

## THE GDL LAW IS WORKING - DO NOT CHANGE IT

Each time a young life is tragically lost in a motor vehicle crash it not only affects the families but the entire community. With each new tragedy, we vow to take action and make sure it will not happen again. Unfortunately, history shows that it almost certainly will occur again. New Jersey has had a Graduated Drivers License Law since 2001 and it continues to be amended to reduce high risk scenarios and strengthen the law, usually as a result of another tragedy.

The latest amendments, effective May 1, 2010, limit the number of passengers, reduce night time driving and eliminate the use of even hands free electronic devices. These are the top three contributors to teen crashes.

The red decal was also part of the May amendments and was established to help law enforcement to recognize a GDL driver and assess compliance with the law. Again, it was established as a result of a tragedy and as you pointed out is wildly unpopular. We would like to point out that at one time (1985) our seatbelt law was also wildly unpopular largely because people did not understand the benefits of wearing one. Over the years, the public has learned the benefits of seat belts and 93 % of New Jersey's drivers and front seat passengers buckle up. Seat belts save thousands of lives every year. We hardly think a law should be repealed based on unpopularity.

We also disagree with individuals deciding which laws they want to follow and which ones they get to disregard. Driving is a privilege and with the privilege comes the responsibility to know the law and obey the law.

Your editorial is correct, there just aren't enough law enforcement officers to enforce all of the laws created to protect us. However, that is not reason enough to repeal any component of this law. The GDL law is working. As noted in your editorial, teen motor vehicle fatalities declined from 67 in 2004 to 28 in 2010 and teen crashes have dropped from an average of 56,000 a year to 43,000 in 2010. And the law will work even better the more people understand the reasons behind the restrictions and work with their new teen drivers to enforce the GDL law at home.

Many parents are concerned that the GDL decal will attract predators, fearing that young drivers will become potential victims of criminal stalkers. But while many feel the decals label their teens, thousands of vehicles display other messages like window stickers identifying high school sports membership, graduating class information, names written on the back window of a teen's vehicle, bumper

stickers, and school parking permits. Unfortunately, sexual and criminal predators can be found lurking in shopping malls, transit facilities, supermarkets, and on the Internet. How many of us personally know any of the two or three hundred friends most of our kids have on sites like Facebook? The hard truth is, the decal has never been associated or attributed to any criminal act. Again, the sole intent of the sticker is to permit law enforcement to recognize a GDL driver and assess compliance with the law with the goal of saving lives.

Our goal is to achieve Zero teen fatalities. We believe that a coordinated effort to understand and enforce the GDL law among our schools, community and athletic organizations, family, and friends, along with law enforcement is the answer. We do not believe that chipping away at the law created to save our kids can do anything else but increase future heart-aches, and the unnecessary loss of young lives in our communities.

Respectfully submitted  
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