

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

News from the House & Senate Majority

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Lawmakers Honored for Making Alaska's Roadways Safer

Buckling Up and Graduated Drivers Licenses Can Save Lives

(ANCHORAGE) – Four legislators received prestigious national awards for their hard work and determination to reduce the number of accidents and to save lives on Alaska's roadways. Sen. Con Bunde (R – Anchorage), Sen. Ralph Seekins (R – Fairbanks), Rep. Lesil McGuire (R – Anchorage) and Rep. Bruce Weyhrauch (R- Juneau) are recipients of the National Transportation Safety Board's State Safety Leadership Awards.

Sen. Bunde sponsored Alaska's new primary seat belt law that requires all drivers and passengers traveling on Alaska's highways to wear a seat belt. "The second or two it takes to buckle up will save an estimated 7 to 8 lives each year. I want to thank my fellow legislators who helped me get this critical piece of legislation passed," said Sen. Bunde.

Sen. Seekins chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee. He helped craft and secure passage of the seat belt law through the legislature. "I've been in the auto body business for more than 30 years and I'm convinced that if seat belts are used, everyone can come out of the accident alive and if someone is injured, the injuries are reduced. Even with air bags and other modern safety features, seat belts are the first step to saving lives," said Sen. Seekins.

Rep. McGuire played a key role in the seat belt law as chair of the House Judiciary Committee. "SB 87 is a sound piece of legislation. There are very few things we can state with certainty saves lives. Wearing seatbelts saves lives. Alaska has one of the highest vehicular accident related death rates in the nation. Many of these deaths and associated injuries may have been prevented by the simple act of wearing of a seatbelt. I think this is a step in the right direction to improving safety on our roads and helping law enforcement protect the public."

The NTSB recognized Rep. Weyhrauch for sponsoring passage of legislation implementing a Graduated Drivers License Program. Under the GDL program, teens who turn 16 are first issued a license that restricts their ability to drive with other teens and during the night. It requires some information from the teenager that they have had drive time experience under varying conditions.

"The GDL program has saved lives in other states and it is saving lives here in Alaska. A very brief period of inconvenience for teens has a huge payback for the safety of all drivers" said Rep. Weyhrauch.

Sen. Bunde, Rep. McGuire and Rep. Weyhrauch received their awards today in Anchorage from NTSB officials.

Sen. Seekins will receive his award in Fairbanks on Wednesday, August 30th at 9:00 am at the Fairbanks Police Department.

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