

TEEN DRIVING SAFETY

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2009

- WHEREAS,** One of the purposes of PTA is to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth; and
- WHEREAS,** Motor vehicle accidents are the No. 1 killer of teenagers in California and in the United States; and
- WHEREAS,** In 1997, California adopted a program of Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) that features phased-in driver education and training, and driving restrictions that are phased out over time; and
- WHEREAS,** Even though required by law, the vast majority of California high schools do not offer driver education courses, and almost none offer behind the wheel training courses, creating a problem of accessibility for many teens; and
- WHEREAS,** Parents have the potential to exert a powerful influence over their children to become safe drivers by serving as good role models, by providing adequate practice experience, and by helping to assure their children's compliance with mandatory GDL restrictions; and
- WHEREAS,** GDL laws have prevented many teenage deaths, but too many teen fatalities still occur, necessitating additional research and planning to identify, develop and implement the most effective methods of creating safe, skillful, confident new drivers in order to further mitigate this danger; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils, and districts to educate parents, students, schools, and communities regarding the risks associated with teen driving, current GDL laws in regard to teen driving, and the crucial role of parents in helping teens become safe drivers; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That PTA units, councils and districts work together and with parents, students, and community partners to urge local and statewide leaders to support research on effective strategies to further reduce accidents involving teenagers; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA encourage the development of consistent, high quality standards for driver education and training programs, and support policy and/or legislation to make such programs accessible to all students; and be it further

RESOLVED, That PTA units, councils, and districts urge schools, law enforcement, and communities to join with parents and students to implement programs to increase awareness of teen driving safety concerns and to improve teen compliance with GDL laws, seat belt laws, cell phone laws, alcoholic beverage prohibitions, and other safe driving laws and practices; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA work with community partners, law enforcement, driver education and training experts, the Department of Education, the Department of Motor Vehicles, and lawmakers to urge the adoption of such additional research-based policies and legislation as may be needed to effectively reduce accidents involving young drivers and their passengers to the lowest possible level; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Teen Driving Safety Resolution be forwarded to National PTA for consideration.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Vehicular accidents are the No. 1 killer of teenagers. Evidence shows that, where faithfully implemented, stricter state laws and Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) programs have helped turn the tide on the rise of fatal accidents involving teenagers. California has some of the toughest laws for new teenage drivers and yet has seen mixed results in teen driving statistics.

In California, we still lose too many teenagers to automobile accidents, and we must do more to research and understand their causes, so as to prevent them.

Years ago, the California Department of Education mandated driver education and in-car driver training in high school; it was a graduation requirement in many districts. However, since then, competing priorities have forced driver education and training from the curriculum, and at present only one-third of California high schools offer driver education (classroom), and only five high schools in the entire state offer driver training (behind the wheel). Though driver education and training are effective at teaching rules of the road and driving skills, studies show no correlation between participating in driver education and training and becoming a safer teen driver. More research is necessary to discover how driver education and training can be made more effective at producing safe drivers.

Parents and the community need to ease young people into the lifelong habit of safe driving. All teens must have access to quality driver education and training that safeguards them as they become drivers. The community must insist on compliance with, and enforcement of, GDL program restrictions. Parents need to know the laws so they can ensure their teenagers follow them. Additional research is needed to determine the cause of the accidents that do happen, so that effective prevention measures can be designed and implemented.

Teen Driving Safety - continued

The Graduated Driver Licensing law is an excellent beginning; but without better information and education, public awareness, further study, and parent involvement, its full benefit cannot be realized, and countless additional teens will lose their lives needlessly on streets and highways.