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Assemblyman

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Special Edition: GDL Survey Results

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Welcome to my Fall Newsletter. This edition is devoted exclusively to the final results of my statewide survey on the Graduated Driver License laws in NJ.



I created the survey in order to get an accurate snapshot of what constituents across the state think about the Kyleigh's Law decals, passenger restrictions, curfews, and overall probation period for teen drivers. Hundreds of you from across the State of New Jersey took the time to respond on this important issue.

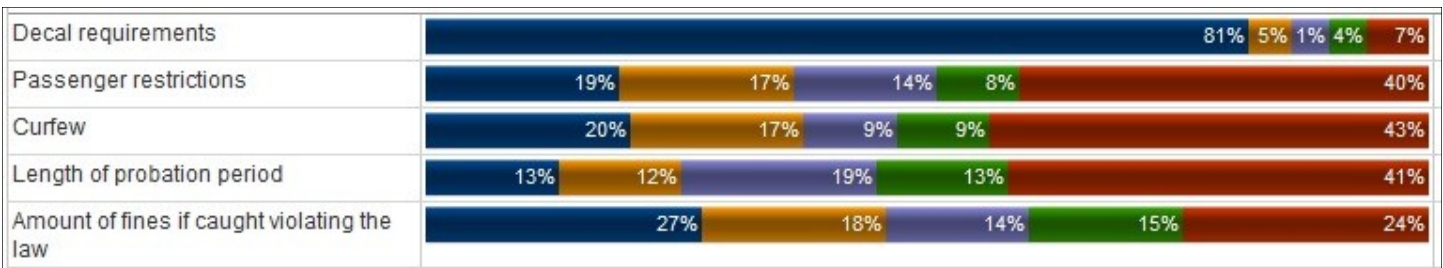
THANK YOU to all who took the time to share their comments and offer feedback on the GDL program in New Jersey. I will continue pushing for my decal repeal bills, A-2650 and A-3210, to receive a fair and open hearing in Committee, and work to get them passed into law. I'll also advocate for the creation of Teen Driver Awareness Week with AJR-46.

— Assemblyman Bob Schroeder

It's Official: NJ wants to ditch the decals!

We asked: **Are there any GDL requirements that you would like to change or eliminate?** If so, indicate how important this change is to you (**Very Important**, **Important**, **Somewhat Important**, **Not Important**, **Don't Change It**).

An overwhelming number our respondents—more than 80%—said that eliminating the decals was very important to them. And yet 40% of those same survey takers support keeping the current passenger restrictions, and 43% would not change the curfew hours. The length of the GDL probation period was not of great concern to most of our respondents, but a surprising number expressed the desire to change the amount of fines that are being charged for those caught violating the law.



Towns in District 39*: *Allendale, Alpine, Bloomingdale, Closter, Cresskill, Demarest, Dumont, Emerson, Harrington Park, Haworth, Hillsdale, Ho-Ho-Kus, Mahwah, Montvale, New Milford, Northvale, Norwood, Oakland, Old Tappan, Oradell, Park Ridge, Ramsey, Ringwood, River Edge, River Vale, Rockleigh, Saddle River, Upper Saddle River, Waldwick, Wanaque, Twp. of Washington, Westwood, Woodcliff Lake* (*italics* indicate towns that will drop to a different district at the end of 2011, **bold** indicates towns that will be added) **NO TAXPAYER FUNDS WERE USED TO PRODUCE THIS NEWSLETTER**

How many teens are obeying the law?

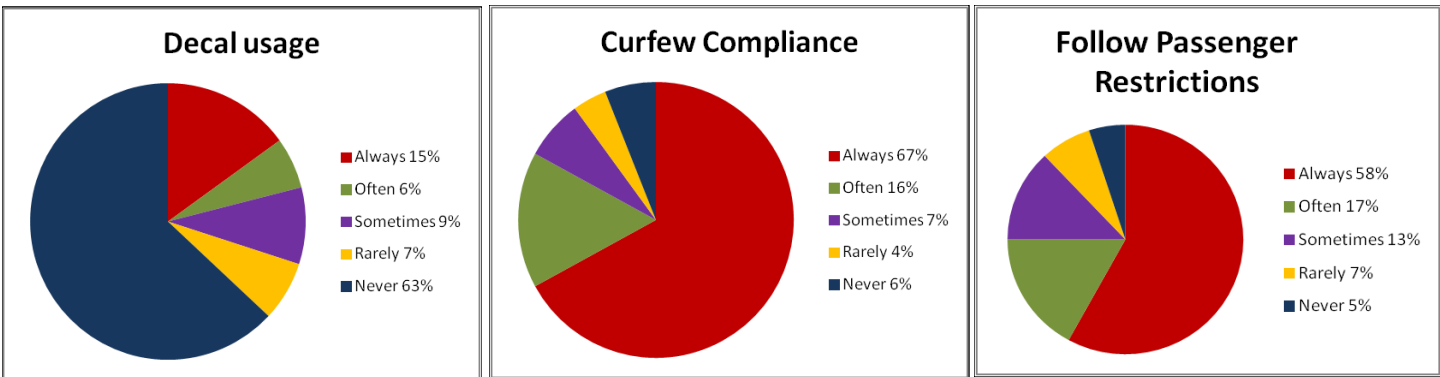
The current law requires GDL holders to affix red Kyleigh’s Law decals to their license plates, adhere to a curfew from 11pm to 5am, and limit themselves to only one passenger.

It’s been suspected that many people are not obeying the GDL laws, but up until now, no one has kept track of just how common non-compliance is for these restrictions, and whether or not it’s the same for each provision of the law. So we asked: **How often do you comply with each of the GDL laws?**

The results: **Of those respondents who should be obeying Kyleigh’s Law, only 15% always comply, while 63% admit they never use the decals.** So, are New Jerseyans completely ignoring the GDL laws?

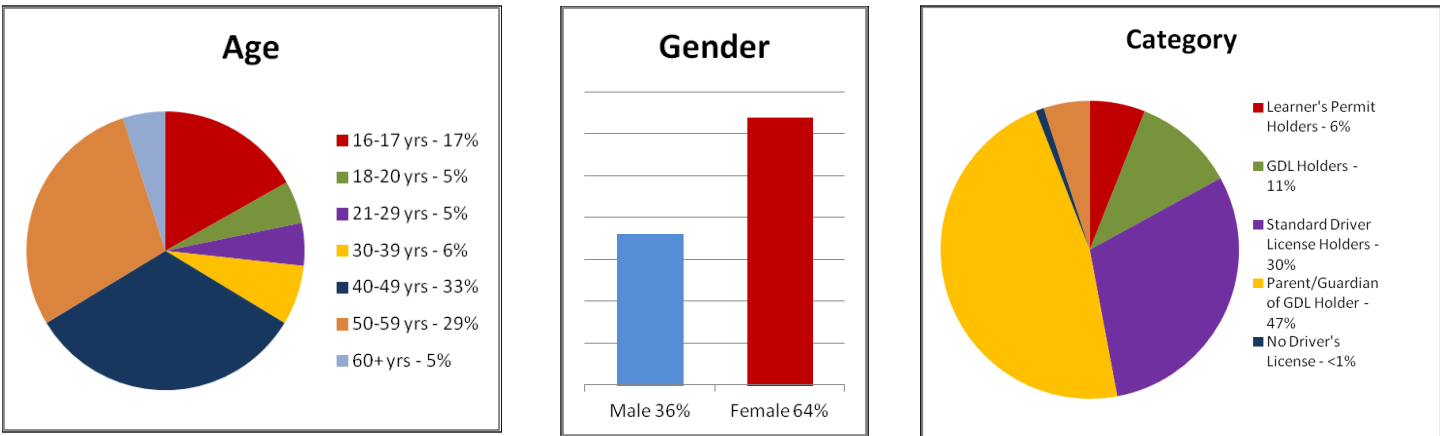
Not quite. When asked about curfews, compliance vs. non-compliance stats changed dramatically. **67% said they always follow the curfew law, and 58% always observe the passenger restrictions.**

These results clearly indicate that a majority of GDL holders consistently obey the law, but make a big exception when it comes to the decals. When normally law-abiding citizens continually risk being ticketed and fined over a certain provision in the law, it’s time for the legislature to take notice, and do something about it!



Parents are the Key to Keeping Teen Drivers Safe
 Visit www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey for helpful tips and information

Who Responded to Our Survey?



Newsletter paid for by Robert Schroeder. No taxpayer funds were used to produce and distribute this mailing. Special thanks to Lisa Yakomin, Antonio Meo and Kathy McCormack for their editorial assistance. All content © 2011 Robert Schroeder.

Why aren't teens using the decals?

Based on my visits to local high schools in District 39, talking with teens about Kyleigh's Law, I suspected that many GDL holders weren't complying with the decal laws. Like our survey respondents, the students I spoke with admitted that they often didn't follow the rules, but few were willing to say exactly why. Our survey helped shed some light in that regard. We asked: **If you're not complying with the GDL laws, which of the following best describes your reasons why?**

74% of our respondents said the Fear of Being Targeted kept them from putting the decals on their cars. 62% said they also feared being profiled by other drivers, 61% believe the decals unfairly discriminate against young drivers, and 41% said they feared being pulled over by the police. 29% of our respondents voiced an overall objection to having decals on their car, and 23% said the GDL laws were too restrictive. There were also many comments on this issue. Here's a sample:

"As a parent of a teenaged daughter, who may be driving home from work in the evenings, I do not want to broadcast that she is a young, inexperienced driver. I'd rather her be safe than sorry."

"We are strongly against allowing our kids to display the decals even though they would be willing to do whatever the law requires them to do. As a parent I feel that I would be setting my kids up for trouble with pedophiles, by someone who wants to bully a young and inexperienced driver and even by a Police Officer who might want to make an impression on a new driver. If my child breaks the law I would expect them to be stopped by the police but I don't want them profiled because of the decals."

"Since we share a car it is not so easy to remember to take the decals on and off each time we switch drivers. Recently got a new (used) car with out decals and did not want to pay to get new decals a second time."

"I will NOT endanger my daughter when she drives by announcing 'this is a 17 year old girl out alone.'"

"I would rather my daughter get a ticket than be targeted. We carefully follow all other rules."

See more comments from our survey respondents on page 4

Are the decals dangerous?

Earlier this year, Attorney General Paula Dow issued a preliminary report about the level of criminal activity surrounding the GDL laws. There was one instance cited where a young teen was targeted as a direct result of having a Kyleigh's Law decal displayed on her license plate. Fortunately, she escaped the encounter unharmed. Although I believe that even one dangerous encounter is already one too many, some have said that the scarcity of criminal incident reports indicates the decals aren't actually that harmful. So, we asked: **Have you ever had a bad experience relating to the GDL requirements, and if so, did you report it to the police?**

The results: **Despite the fact that 70% of our respondents Rarely or Never use the decals, more than 20% said they *have* had a bad experience, and yet, 93% of them did not report the incident to the police.**

Many respondents said they experienced increased rudeness from other drivers whenever the decals were on the car, even when a parent or guardian was driving. Many reported having their decals stolen within days of affixing them. One teen was taunted by passengers in another car about his decals, and was nearly run off the road.

The reasons for not reporting these incidents were just as varied as the incidents themselves. Many said they didn't see the perpetrator or get their license plate number, so there was nothing police could do if called. Other GDL holders expressed concern that a responding officer would not have allowed them to drive home once the report was filled out and they were still without decals. And, a substantial number of respondents alleged that it was the police themselves who were responsible for targeting them. Several said they were pulled over by police, even when no laws were being broken, and given tickets for other uncommon offenses such as obstructed view. I believe this lack of reporting, when coupled with the high rate of non-compliance with the decal law, have resulted in the low number of police reports that exist relating to GDL restrictions.

*For a link to the PDF version of this newsletter
visit www.robertschroeder.com*

Is the decal requirement keeping teens safe?

According to the very latest Accident Statistics from the NJ State Police, automobile fatalities for teens are higher than they were at this same time last year. There have been several fatal accidents involving teen drivers over the past few months, and in at least two cases, the driver did not have their decals displayed. Decals aren't the answer—education and parental enforcement is the key. We need to work harder to raise awareness amongst parents as to what the GDL laws are, and encourage consistent enforcement at home if we want to improve safety for teen drivers.

Comments from Survey Respondents

"As an owner of a driving school I follow the law, and tell my students' parents about the law. As a parent of a 16 year old I do not mind having the decals on for the permit as someone 21 yrs old is with them. Once my son gets his probationary license, I will take them off. These decals will not keep kids safer. I have a sign on my car and sometimes have other drivers purposely mess with my students. I would support this 100% if I thought it would keep the kids 5% safer but it does the opposite."

"If it is the law, people should abide by it. Parents that disobey by not using the stickers or by not following the other guidelines should be punished. These parents are supposed to be setting an example for their children. Maybe a \$500 fine would be more appropriate."

"Besides 'predators' the stickers invite bullies to target and harass the young driver. It has happened to my child when I am with her as well. Total waste of time and dangerous, too."

"I believe the 11:00pm curfew is unreasonable for a HS senior. The old time of 12am is more in line with reality. I think that is the driver is in their hometown and just driving home from a friend's house at midnight, that should be ok."

"Family members should be excluded from [the] passenger total as long as everyone is seat belted in [the] vehicle. Curfew and decals have done little to [reduce] accidents. The best way to prevent accidents is to enforce the driving laws 24/7."

"I did not want my son to be a target . The red sticker says to a predator 'I am young driver and chances are I am alone in this car'."

"The GDL laws have no teeth. First offense should be a fine and a mandatory class on driver safety, second offense, a fine and a 30 day suspension, third offense and over, a fine, community service and a six month suspension, and parent's should be held accountable for any illegal action by their underage children."

"Other drivers are rude, tailgate and treat me worse when I have decals on. I take them off and no one bothers me. My decals got stolen at school two weeks after I put them on."

Stay in Touch

There are several ways for constituents to reach me:

- Call my office at (201) 391-3673. It is staffed Monday thru Friday from 9am to 5pm.
- Join my page on Facebook
- Follow me on Twitter: @SchroederNJ
- Read my blog (www.robertschroeder.com/wordpress)
- Call or email my office anytime and sign up to receive future copies of this newsletter via email. We do not share our list with anyone, and you may unsubscribe at any time.

I look forward to hearing from you!

How You Can Help

Attorney General Paula Dow's final report on the effectiveness of the GDL program is scheduled to be released by October 7.

Please take a moment to contact her office at 609-292-4925 and share your thoughts on the GDL program. I also encourage you to contact your local legislator (find their contact info at www.njleg.state.nj.us/members/legsearch.asp) and share your views on the decals, curfews and passenger restrictions.

It's important to let your voice be heard on this issue, and help us effect change in order to keep teens safe.