

## **Following Deadlier Than Expected 2020, New Highway Safety Report Provides Solutions State Legislatures Can Take Action on as 2021 Sessions Kick Off**

*Countermeasures Recommended by Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) Are Proven to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes, Fatalities and Injuries and Keep Motorists Out of Overly-Burdened Emergency Rooms*

WASHINGTON ([PRWEB](#)) January 11, 2021 -- Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) today released the 18th edition of the annual [Roadmap of State Highway Safety Laws](#) (Report), a comprehensive, evidence-based guide to state legislatures seeking to turn the page on a year when emptier roads turned into risky racetracks. In 2020, impaired and distracted driving increased, and seat belt use decreased, contributing to a higher overall fatality rate in the first half of the year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and news reports from around the country. In the Report, Advocates urges states to “Change this Picture in 2021,” by enacting 16 recommended optimal [highway safety laws](#) on occupant protection, child passenger safety, graduated driver licensing (GDL), impaired driving, and distracted driving. Advocates was joined for the Report’s virtual release by a distinguished panel of lawmakers as well as speakers from the public health sector, the insurance industry, and a grassroots traffic violence victim advocate.

[Report Findings:](#) Advocates’ Report gives every state and Washington, D.C. a rating in five categories (Occupant Protection, Child Passenger Safety, Teen Driving, Impaired Driving, and Distracted Driving) as well as an overall grade of: Green (Good); Yellow (Caution); and Red (Danger). This year, New York joined the list of seven other states (RI, WA, DE, ME, OR, CA, LA) and Washington, D.C. receiving green ratings. New York’s rating upgrade comes following the state’s enactment of an all-occupant seat belt requirement in 2020. Thirty (30) states received a yellow rating indicating the need for improvement. Twelve (12) states earned a red rating for lagging dangerously behind in the adoption of Advocates’ recommended laws (MO, WY, MT, AZ, FL, NE, NV, NH, OH, SD, VT, VA). South Dakota, while remaining on the “red” list is being recognized by Advocates as the “most improved” for enacting four optimal laws including an all-driver texting ban and significant upgrades to its GDL program – elevating South Dakota from its previous spot as the state with the fewest laws. Unfortunately, Missouri becomes one of just two states with only three optimal laws on the books, after the repeal in 2020 of its 52-year-old all-rider motorcycle helmet requirement.

[Cathy Chase](#), President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety: “As our Nation continues to cope with the devastating, wide-ranging ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are offering the 2021 Roadmap of State Highway Safety Laws to spur action to implement proven solutions to keep motorists and road users safe - and out of the over-extended emergency rooms. During the nearly two decades we’ve been issuing the Roadmap Report, nearly 600,000 people have been killed on our Nation’s roads and over 40 million more have been injured. This public health toll is significant, staggering, and deserving of swift action and serious attention. In addition to advancing state laws identified in the report, verified vehicle safety technologies can prevent and mitigate numerous crashes. We call on the new Congress and the incoming Administration to prioritize requiring technologies such as automatic emergency braking, lane departure warning and blind spot detection in all new vehicles. With these strategies at the state and federal levels, we can ‘change the picture’ in 2021 and beyond.”

Alan Maness, Vice President of Federal Affairs and Counsel, State Farm Insurance Companies, and Insurer Co-

Chair of Advocates: “As the Nation’s leading property casualty insurance company, State Farm is a proud founding Board Member of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates). This organization has a successful track record of bringing together insurance companies and consumer, public health, law enforcement and safety groups. Throughout its history, the Roadmap Report’s core value of serving as a catalyst to improve safety on our Nation’s roads has remained crucial, coherent and consistent. State Farm and our insurance colleagues on Advocates’ Board are also proud to support federal legislation to ensure that all new cars are equipped with advanced impaired driving prevention technology. Working on a dual track to harness this technology and to support passage of the impaired driving laws in the Roadmap Report, we can maximize protection for all road users.”

Former State Senator David Carlucci (D-NY, 38th District), Sponsor of S. 4336 to require rear seat belt use, enacted 2020: “I am pleased to join Advocates for the Roadmap Report release to discuss traffic safety and the effort I co-led to enact New York’s [new seat belt law](#). The simple act of buckling up saves lives. It can also determine whether you are able to walk away from a crash or will have to endure debilitating injuries. Yet, nearly half of those killed in crashes neglect to do so. With reports of seat belt use dropping and reckless driving and speeding spiking in 2020, state legislative action to upgrade traffic safety laws is vital.”

Ivette Chaidez, Education Outreach Coordinator, Impact Teen Drivers: “This year, my family will mark a decade since my 17-year-old sister, Itzy, became one of approximately 4,000 teens who lose their lives in traffic crashes each year. We miss Itzy every single day, and it motivates my work to promote teen safe driving and comprehensive graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws as recommended in the Roadmap Report. GDL programs minimize risk for inexperienced novice drivers, instill lifelong safe driving behaviors, help to prevent crashes and save lives. These protections should also cover older teen and young adult novice drivers as well. I urge my home state of California to extend our GDL law to this risky driving population in 2021.”

U.S. Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL, 8th), Sponsor of SAFE TO DRIVE Act: “The SAFE TO DRIVE Act is a bipartisan measure meant to help provide resources to states as they try to encourage people to engage in non-distracted driving. This will help to unlock grants to states that are doing a good job already and to create new ones in other states. This is essential as we try to get the message out that it is time to put down the phone. We together are going to make our roads safer and the SAFE TO DRIVE Act is going to be an essential component of our agenda for moving our country forward and making our highways and roads safe to drive.”

State Assemblyman Nicholas Chiaravalloti (D-NJ, 31st), Sponsor of A. 855 to curb distracted driving: “There is no doubt that technology allowed us to stay in touch during a period of social distancing; however, there is a time and a place for everything. Each of us knows that it only takes a second for a tragedy to occur. We need to work together to create laws that educate drivers, and I have introduced legislation, A. 855, that prohibits streaming video while driving regardless of whether you are holding the phone or not. I want to thank Cathy Chase and Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety for their leadership and commitment on this issue.”

Stephen W. Hargarten, MD, MPH, Professor of Emergency Medicine, Medical College of Wisconsin and Consumer Co-Chair of Advocates: “I am keenly aware of the demands placed on medical workers during these difficult times – overburdened hospitals, round-the-clock hours, and the heart-rendering decisions about the allocation of medical equipment and supplies. We owe it to them to do everything we can to keep ourselves safe to stop further straining the health care system. A major part of that is preventing crashes and serious injuries. While lawmakers seek to contend with immediate needs resulting from COVID-19, so too should they prioritize the countermeasures in Advocates’ Roadmap Report to reduce incidents that will only serve to

compound the current public health and health care challenges.”

Opportunities for improvement in 2021:

Based on Advocates’ safety recommendations, states need to adopt 390 laws.

- 16 states need an optimal primary enforcement seat belt law for front seat passengers;
- 30 states need an optimal primary enforcement seat belt law for rear seat passengers;
- 32 states need an optimal all-rider motorcycle helmet law;
- 35 states need a rear facing through age 2 law;
- 34 states and DC need an optimal booster seat law;
- 190 GDL laws needed to ensure the safety of novice drivers, no state meets all recommended criteria;
- 29 critical impaired driving laws are needed in 27 states;
- 4 states need an optimal all-driver text messaging restriction; and,
- 19 states need a GDL cell phone restriction.

The traumatic and dramatic challenges experienced in 2020 were unprecedented in modern day. While disturbing trends have emerged on our roadways, Advocates’ Roadmap Report outlines tried-and-true solutions to reverse them and target additional incessant crash factors. Advocates and our safety partners urge lawmakers in state capitals to prioritize the 16 recommended laws in the Report as part of a holistic approach to improving public health and safety. With tens of thousands of deaths and millions of injuries occurring every year, it’s time to “change this picture.”

[Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety](#) is an alliance of consumer, medical, public health, law enforcement and safety groups and insurance companies and agents working together to make America’s roads safer. Advocates’ mission is the adoption of federal and state laws, policies and programs that prevent motor vehicle crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and contain costs.



### **Contact Information**

#### **Peter Daniels**

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

<http://https://saferoads.org/>

+1 301-442-2249

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Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

<http://https://saferoads.org/>

301-442-2249

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