

New Laws Go Into Effect on July 1

A number of new laws will go into effect on July 1, the start of the state's fiscal year. Several changes were made during the 2010 legislative session that will affect Iowans, including new seat belt requirements for kids in the back seat, a ban on text messaging while driving, and new protections for victims of domestic abuse.

Some of the changes taking effect on July 1 include:

Support for Small Businesses – Focuses state job creation efforts on small Iowa businesses instead of large Wall Street companies by increasing the Research Activities Credit available for small businesses (Senate File 2380)

Domestic Abuse – Forfeiture of Guns - If a person is convicted of domestic abuse or is the subject of a permanent protective order, the person will lose the ability to own guns. (Senate File 2357)

Texting Ban - Drivers under the age of 18 years cannot use an electronic device while driving, unless it is installed in the vehicle or operated through permanently installed equipment. Drivers over 18 cannot use a hand-held communication device to read, write, or send a text message, but can use the device to make a phone call. The penalty for all ages is a \$30 fine, with harsher penalties if in an accident with serious injury or death. Warning citations begin on July 1, 2010, and fines begin on July 1, 2011. (House File 2456)

Seat Belts - Requires all persons under the age of 18 years to use either a safety seat or seat belt unless all seat belts are already being used. If a person age 14 years or older is not using a seat belt, they will get the ticket, not the driver of the vehicle. (Senate File 2381)

Military Spouse Benefits - Allows unemployment benefits for an individual who left employment because of the relocation of the individual's spouse due to a military assignment in another area. (House File 2110)

Grain Weight Limit for Farmers - Allows commercial motor vehicles, other than special trucks, on non-interstate highways, to haul up to 90,000 lbs. on six axles and 96,000 lbs. on seven axles. Currently allowed for livestock or construction vehicles, this allows farmers to haul heavier grain on trucks with more axles. (House File 2512)

Health Insurance & Cancer Trials - Insurers say they pay for routine care for cancer patients in clinical trials, but many patients are reluctant to participate fearing they will lose their health insurance. This bill makes it easier for patients to participate in these trials by assuring them that routine care will continue to be covered. (House File 2075)

Mental Health Hospitalization Notification (Ed Thomas Bill) - Assures that law enforcement are notified when individuals hospitalized for a serious mental impairment are released from care if there is an arrest warrant or pending charges against the individual. (Senate File 2352)

Smart Growth and Comprehensive Planning - Establishes a set of ten comprehensive planning principles that state and local governments should use in preparing for future growth. These principles are guides and are not mandates. (Senate File 2389)

For more information on these or other bills, go to www.iowahouse.org.