Georgia Drops Driving Test Requirement for License Due to Pandemic

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Apr 29, 2020

Under a new executive order given by Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, teenagers within the Peach State will no longer need to pass a formal driving test in order to secure a driver's license. Instead they'll just have to get the 'A-okay' from their parents.

Like roughly 80 percent of news these days, this development is related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

All other driving requirements will still have to be met by young Georgians, but the final road test conducted by an instructor (who sweats like crazy, cranks up the A/C, and points all the fans at himself...at least when I took it) will be chopped.

This new/easier process will be in place as the Department of Driver Services carries out social distancing policies during the pandemic. Those policies make the road tests that require a shared vehicle unworkable, so the state's decided to just drop them altogether.
"During these unprecedented times, the Department of Driver Services is trying to make it as easy as a process for people to get their license and to lessen the burden on people right now," said Stormi Kenney, who owns a driving school within the state, to Fox 5 Atlanta.

Kenney clarified that, though road tests have been axed for the time being, drivers will still have to complete all previous requirements, such as racking up 40 hours of supervised time behind the wheel.

That means parents are on the honor system to make the official decision about whether or not their child's ready for a license. This seems like an idea that's a little out there.

"I think it would be beneficial to have an unbiased set of eyes on my driver. I think I might be quick to let her get her license not knowing if she knows all the laws," said one parent of a teen who spoke to Fox 5.

"I'm good with them dropping the road test piece so she can get out there and drive," said the parent of a second teen who spoke to Fox 5.

Well Georgia drivers, sounds like time to double-check that insurance policy.

The current executive order is set to expire in mid-May.

**Now Write.** What reaction do you have to this executive order? Explain why you think it might be necessary and if you think it's a good or bad idea, even under current circumstances.

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Task 2: Examine the cartoon below in order to respond to the questions that follow.

1. A. What do you see as the main idea of the cartoon?

1. B. What evidence do you see in the cartoon that supports that main idea?

2. A. Explain whether you believe the cartoonist would agree or disagree with Georgia’s governor’s executive order allowing teens to drive without undergoing the driving test.

2. B. What in the article supports your answer above? What in the cartoon supports your answer?
Task 3: Examine the timeline below as a resource to better respond to the questions that follow.
2000 - A study released by the Ford Motor Co. reveals that most of the 14- and 15-year-old children killed in car crashes between 1995 and 1998 were riding with young drivers.

2001 - 38 states and the District of Columbia now limit teenage drivers with Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) programs. 5 other states are considering such programs.

Jan 2006 - 44 states and the district of Columbia now have 3-stage GDL systems. The states with a 2-stage system are Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, and North Dakota.

2000 - According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, 175 out of every 1000 licensed 16-year-old girls got in a car accident this year. For every 1000 licensed 16-year-old boys, 210 got in an accident.

2002 - The National Transportation Safety Board recommends that all states restrict new drivers with provisional licenses from having more than 1 passenger under the age of 20 for their first 6 months, and that states require the adult supervising the learner to be 21 or older.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety releases a report that says licensing drivers at age 17, instead of at 16, would "substantially reduce crashes involving teen drivers."
2008 - Federal data reveals that 30.7% of 16-year-olds got their driver's licenses in 2008, compared with 44.7% in 1988.

2011 - A series of studies by the National Institutes of Health reveal that graduated licensing laws and other restrictions on teen drivers have reduced the rate of fatal crashes among 16-17-year-olds by 8 to 14%.

Oct 2016 - A study by the Governors Highway Safety Association reveals that from 2005 to 2014, car crash deaths among people ages 15 to 20 declined 51% and serious injuries were down 59%.

2011 - The results of a study by Liberty Mutual Insurance and Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) reveal that "68% of teens said they had narrowly avoided a crash, and more than half had experienced more than 1 close call in the past year."

Jan 2016 - A study by the University of Michigan highlights a sharp decline in the number of young people getting their driver's licenses over the past two decades. Less than a quarter of 16-year-old today have their licenses, down from 46% in 1983.
Critical Questions

1. What do you think the minimum age to obtain a driver's license should be and why do you think this?

2. Explain how certain restrictions on teen drivers--like graduated licensing or limiting the number of passengers--could make them better drivers.

3. What else could be done to make sure teens are prepared for the responsibilities of driving an automobile?

4. Why do you think so many teenage drivers are involved in serious accidents?