

05-21-17
State Journal Register



Letter: Speed limit should not be increased

Posted May 21, 2017 at 8:00 PM

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and the Highway Loss Data Institute have spent decades studying the effects of increased highway speeds, with clear results: Increased speed means increased fatalities.

Yet, Senate Bill 2036 is sponsored by more than 20 state legislators. It proposes raising the speed limit on suburban and rural interstates from 70 to 75 mph. Speed limits on urban interstates would go from 55 to 60 mph.

A dangerous culture of speeding already exists. More than half of drivers surveyed admit to driving 15 mph over the speed limit at least once in the past month. It's no surprise that 37 percent of Illinois crash fatalities are a result of speeding. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Illinois is well ahead of the national rate of 28 percent.

Driver response time decreases as speed increases, and yet distractions continue; crash protections built into cars lose effectiveness at higher speeds; and as speed limits increase, the likelihood that drivers exceed the limit also increases.

Some people say that raising the speed limit to match the speed people are driving is safer. That story defies physical reality, and it defies what is known by transportation officials, police and the insurance industry.

Given what is known about driving behavior and Illinois' aging infrastructure, raising the posted speed limit to 75 mph seems unethical — and a death sentence for more than 350 Illinoisans every year.

Encourage your state legislator to vote no on SB2036.

Kevin J. Martin