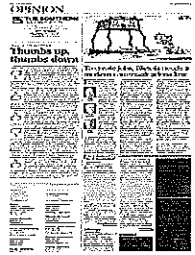




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Speed kills

To the Editor:

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

Yet, Senate Bill 2036 is sponsored by more than 20 state legislators, Republican and Democrat alike. SB2036 proposes raising the speed limit on suburban and rural interstates from 70 miles per hour to 75 mph. Speed limits on urban interstates would go from 55 mph 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. When you think about that behavior, 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. Raising Illinois' speed limits will only encourage

this dangerous behavior.

We live in a world with physical realities and limits. 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. For more information, see the National Safety Council's blog — Speed kills: always has, always will.

Encourage your state legislator to vote "no" on SB2036.

Kevin J. Martin
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