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**SPECIAL MESSAGE**  
**to**  
**MEMBERS OF LEGISLATURE**  
**ON**  
**TRAFFIC SAFETY**

**GOVERNOR, ELMER L. ANDERSEN,**

**March 23, 1961**

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Highways, state  
safety

## **Special Message to Members of Legislature on Traffic Safety**

**Governor Einar L. Anderson**

**March 23, 1961**

Every member of this legislature knows that the people of our state want our laws relating to traffic safety strengthened. No subject has brought more mail. A large number of bills have been introduced. This interest is easy to understand in the face of a record toll of lives on our highways in 1960, and 1961 fatalities running even higher than that of a year ago.

It is imperative that we focus attention on the most essential measures and press for immediate action to assure enactment of a sound program on which our people insist. We haven't much time left. Therefore I respectfully urge you, the members of the 62nd Legislature, to act promptly and favorably on bills which are before you which provide for:

### **1. Implied Consent**

The drinking driver is one of the greatest hazards on our highways today. I strongly support legislation that would require drivers who have been arrested and charged with driving under the influence to submit to a chemical test or face revocation of their driving privilege. This would help to convict the guilty and at the same time protect those who are innocent. In addition it would have a strong deterrent effect upon those who might be tempted to drive after drinking.

This bill has been recommended to pass by the Senate Judiciary Committee after a very thorough study and airing of all of the implications and applications of this proposed law.

### **2. Arrest on Reasonable Grounds**

It is not often that an officer actually observes an accident. Under present law his arrest power is limited. Often he is prevented from making an arrest even though he may arrive at the scene of an accident very soon after

it has occurred and it is very clear that an arrest should be made. We need a law that would give officers power of arrest on reasonable grounds. This can be drafted with sufficient personal safeguards and its application can be watched carefully in the coming biennium.

### **3 Driver Education**

The effectiveness of driver education has been clearly demonstrated. All studies in Minnesota and in other states point up the fact that young drivers who have been given the advantage of approved courses in driver education are involved in fewer accidents and traffic violations than those who have not had the benefit of such courses. Unfortunately, only slightly more than half of our young people now receive complete driver education instruction. Therefore I strongly support the bills which you are now considering which would expand driver education to the point where an approved course of instruction would be available to every new driver, and that no one under 18 be granted a license without driver training.

### **4 Examination for All Drivers Upon License Renewal**

All of the information available to us indicates that large numbers of drivers who are presently licensed in our state have inadequate vision. On the basis of large scale voluntary eye checks, it is estimated that as many as 125,000 licensed drivers do not meet minimum vision requirements. More than half of the drivers in Minnesota have never been required to take an examination to demonstrate their ability to see properly or their knowledge of the traffic laws. Therefore I strongly support the bills which are now being considered in both House and Senate which provide for a vision check and written examination on traffic laws and signs, on renewal of driver license.

### **5 Increase in Highway Patrol Strength**

The quickest and most effective action we can take to curb accidents is increasing our traffic law enforcement. This has been demonstrated wherever

"saturation" patrols have been employed. Where there is adequate enforcement, accidents have declined.

Our Minnesota Highway Patrol has not been increased in manpower since the 1957 session although there has been a great increase in numbers of drivers, numbers of vehicles registered in Minnesota and miles traveled on our streets and highways. After examining recommendations from national organizations and from our own highway department, I believe that a very substantial increase in our Minnesota Highway Patrol is necessary now. I also believe that we should make provision at this time for further annual increases in our highway patrol commensurate with the annual increases in traffic. I am pleased to note that bills providing for increase in patrol manpower are proceeding well in both the Senate and the House.

#### **6 Driving Without a License**

I have been particularly concerned with the need for strengthening our laws in relation to those drivers who deliberately flout our laws by driving after suspension, after revocation or without a license. Several bills have been introduced to deal more stringently with this type of violation.

Committees in both houses are now at work studying these various proposals which provide for stiffer penalties, mandatory jail sentences, confiscation and sale of vehicles and mandatory impounding of license plates. I hope that the committees will recommend strong laws which will enable our courts to deal more harshly with the person who deliberately and flagrantly violates our laws by driving without a license.

#### **7 Absolute Speed Limits**

The multiplicity of speed laws which we now have in effect are confusing to motorists and law enforcement officials as well. Therefore I strongly urge that a single type numerical speed limit be enacted and that those prima facie provisions in our present speed law be removed.

### 8. Motor Vehicle Inspection

A great number of accidents are the result of defective equipment. Experience in other states indicates that accidents from this cause can be eliminated by motor vehicle inspection. Voluntary inspection programs in our own state indicate that 1 in 5 vehicles is defective. I urge adoption of such a measure.

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There are additional proposals also worthy of your favorable action which would contribute much to an effective program. These are the adoption of a uniform traffic tag, the requirement of tested safety devices such as seat belts, special penalties for aggravated speeding offenses and the use of unmarked cars.

To supplement your efforts in making more effective laws available we in the executive branch will stress strict enforcement, we will urge municipal judges to effectively use the penalties provided, and we will generate programs of safety education, and coordinate all agencies relating to traffic safety in the most effective way we can devise.

I am convinced beyond any doubt that the citizens of Minnesota are in favor of these laws designed to save property, pain and lives. This conviction is based on the many messages which have come to my office from people all over our state.

Incidentally, we have tabulated more than 1700 letters which expressed a definite stand on specific issues and found that:

82 percent favored implied consent

57 percent favored unmarked patrol cars

95 percent favored driver education for all persons under 18

60 percent favored examination for all drivers upon license removal

88 percent favored increase in highway patrol strength

88 percent favored stiffer penalties for drivers license violations

All of these messages indicate a great public concern for ending traffic accidents. These people want action on these proposals. They expect action, for even as we deliberate these matters the rate of traffic fatalities is increasing. In the first two and one-half months of this year 120 people died as the result of traffic accidents. This is 13 more than had been killed in the same period last year. With your cooperation we will mount an offensive against this frightful slaughter and insist on effective results.