

For Immediate Release

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Back-to-School Reminder: NSTA Highlights Dangers of Illegal Passing of School Buses

YARDVILLE, NJ – As students across the nation return to school, the National School Transportation Association (NSTA) urges motorists to exercise vigilance and obey all applicable traffic laws when driving near or around school buses. Data released in July during the 2026 NSTA Annual Meeting & Convention in Denver underscores that illegal passing of stopped school buses remains a serious, yet preventable, threat to student safety.

At the 2026 NSTA Annual Meeting & Convention in Denver, the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services (NASDPTS) released the results of its 14th national survey on illegal passing of stopped school buses. In 39 states and the District of Columbia, 101,334 school bus drivers (representing approximately 26.2 percent of the nation's school bus drivers) reported 56,024 illegal passing incidents in a single day during the 2025–2026 school year. When adjusted to reflect 100 percent of school bus drivers nationwide, the data projects more than 213,800 illegal passings each school day, and when extrapolated across an 180-day school year, these numbers represent the potential for more than 38.4 million violations annually.

While the 2026 statistics mark a reduction from the 45.2 million violation extrapolated for the 2023–24 school year, the projected total of 39.3 million violations for the 2024–25 school year still represents a chronic epidemic of illegal passings and reinforces the crucial need for continued public education, violation enforcement, and motorist awareness.

“School bus safety is a shared responsibility, and this data is a reminder that motorists play a critical role in protecting students,” said Patrick Dean, NSTA President. “Our members see every day how quickly a routine bus stop can become dangerous when a driver fails to stop. NSTA remains committed to working with partners nationwide to raise awareness, support strong enforcement, and keep children safe at the bus stop and on the ride to school.”

For decades, school buses have been recognized as the safest form of student transportation. The yellow bus remains the gold standard for getting children to and from school safely, but the protection that children have inside the bus gets undermined when motorists ignore flashing red lights, disregard an extended stop arm, or attempt to pass a stopped school bus. Each violation creates an unnecessary risk for students, families, drivers, and communities and put children directly in harm's way on the outside of the school bus.

For several years, the organization has been promoting social media campaigns targeting full scale community awareness to the return of school buses to the nation's roadways. During summer recess, motorists have not been sharing roadways with school buses, and the return of the unique starting and stopping patterns of these buses require drivers to once engage properly, legally, and safely around stopped school buses. The campaign **#KidsDeserveABrake** will continue through the end of September.

“The data released at the NSTA Annual Meeting and Convention in Denver, shows that awareness and enforcement efforts are making a difference, but with more than 38 million illegal passings in a single school year, the numbers are still not acceptable for schoolchildren throughout the United States,” said Curt Macysyn, NSTA Executive Director. “Every time a motorist illegally passes a stopped school bus, children's safety is put at risk. As the school year begins, NSTA is calling on drivers, law enforcement,

and communities to treat these violations with the seriousness they deserve and to help ensure every student gets to and from school safely.”

Additionally, the organization continues to champion the “Brake for Kids Act” (H.R.2348 / S.2812), an important advocacy initiative for NSTA that would direct the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to execute a nationwide public safety messaging campaign involving television and radio advertisements highlighting the dangers of illegal school bus passing. With millions of illegal school bus passings occurring each year, the need for this legislation remains urgent, particularly during Back-to-School window in late August and early September. By creating a national campaign to remind drivers that it is illegal in all 50 states to pass a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing and stop arm extended, the Brake for Kids Act would help reinforce safe driving behavior, support local enforcement efforts, and protect students at the bus stop. NSTA continues to actively seek co-sponsors for the legislation in both the House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate.

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About NSTA: The National School Transportation Association has been the voice of private school bus contractors, vehicle manufacturers, and vendors for more than 60 years. Founded in 1964, the Association provides school transportation professionals with the tools and resources they need to make school buses safe, affordable, and efficient nationwide.