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CHAIR OF THE LEGISLATURE

NEWS RELEASE

SCHENECTADY COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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For Immediate Release:
October 23, 2008

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SCHENECTADY COUNTY LEGISLATURE CHAIRWOMAN SUSAN E. SAVAGE TO INTRODUCE LOCAL LAW TO BAN TEXT MESSAGING WHILE DRIVING

(Schenectady, NY) – Schenectady County Legislature Chairwoman Susan E. Savage today introduced a proposed local law to ban text messaging while driving.

“This is an important public safety issue,” said Chairwoman Savage. “Research has shown the dangers of driver distractions so it is important that we propose legislation that will prevent a deadly accident before it happens.

“I also hope this will raise awareness to this dangerous and deadly behavior. Before the New York State seatbelt law, most drivers knew it was a good idea to wear one, but only 17% of drivers were motivated to change their old habits. Now, 89% of drivers in New York State wear their seatbelts.”

In June 2007, a crash killed five Upstate New York teens with investigators looking into the possibility that text messaging was a cause of the crash. Further evidence to the risk of texting includes the recent deadly commuter train crash in Los Angeles, where the initial investigation shows the conductor was text messaging a minute before the crash.

A 2006 study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found that nearly 80 percent of crashes along with 65 percent of near-crashes involved some form of driver distraction within three seconds. According to a research conducted by the Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company, 20 percent of drivers between 18 and 60 are sending text messages while driving and Zogby found that 66 percent of 18-24 year-olds text while driving.

Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety and Students Against Destructive Decisions found that 37 percent of teens described text messaging as extremely or very distracting. Despite this, 61% of teens admit to risky driving behavior and nearly half of those teens admit to text messaging according to a study by AAA and *Seventeen* magazine.

By considering this legislation, Schenectady County would join Monroe County in proposing a ban. In New York State, Westchester and Suffolk counties have already passed similar bans. Alaska, California, Connecticut, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Washington State have also passed state-wide bans.