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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Media Advisory

WHO: Madison County State's Attorney's Office to discuss texting and driving with local high school students as part of statewide "Drive Now. Text Later." campaign.

WHEN: Wednesday, September 26, 2012, 8:35-2:30

WHERE: Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Road, Alton, IL 618.474.2700; multiple Driver's Education Classes

SIGNIFICANCE: Assistant State's Attorney Ellen Burford will speak with Driver's Education students at Alton High School about the consequences of texting and driving. Illinois law prohibits composing, sending and reading electronic messages while driving (625 ILCS 5/12-610.2). Depending on their age, teenage drivers face serious repercussions with regards to obtaining and keeping their driver's license if they violation the texting and driving law. Drivers under 19 are prohibited from using a cell phone with or without a hands-free device. Additionally, drivers under 19 face restrictions on their licenses if found guilty of texting and driving.

Besides the legal consequences, the State's Attorney's Office will also remind students of the dangers of texting and driving. According to the *Virginia Tech Transportation Institute*, drivers who text are 23 times more likely to be in a car crash. In addition to civil penalties, drivers can also face charges of Reckless Homicide in the event of a fatal car crash occurring as a result of texting and driving.

State's Attorney Tom Gibbons came up with the idea as a way to use the resources of his office to reach out to various groups in the community to show them that actions have consequences. Gibbons pointed to a report from AAA that cited traffic accidents as the leading cause of death for people age 15-20. "I realize that we live in such a technology-driven world, but what I hope my prosecutors can convey to these kids is that they need to set down or turn off their phones and focus on driving when they're behind the wheel. Drive Now. Text Later. If not, there may be consequences that are simply not worth it in the long run."

Assistant State's Attorney Burford is a prosecutor in the Misdemeanor/Traffic Division. She will be asking the students in each class to take a pledge to not text and drive. Students will be offered extra credit in exchange for returning the pledge. Gibbons hopes to have his staff talk to all of the high schools in Madison County and make it an annual occurrence for his office. Prosecutors were at Granite City High School on September 21st and are scheduled to visit Collinsville High School on Thursday, October 4th.

Members of the media are welcome to stop by the high school; driver's education classes will be running throughout the day.

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