



Arkansas House Newsletter

July 31, 2026

Flashing Red Kids Ahead



As another school year begins, hundreds of thousands of Arkansas students will once again be riding school buses each day. In fact, more than 350,000 children rely on school buses to get safely to and from school, with buses making thousands of stops in communities across our state.

That makes it more important than ever for every driver to know—and follow—the law when sharing the road with a school bus. When a school bus stops, extends its stop arm, and activates its flashing red lights, it means children are getting on or off the bus. Those students may be crossing the street or walking alongside the roadway, and their safety depends on drivers paying attention. In Arkansas, it is illegal to pass a stopped school bus from any direction when its red lights are flashing.

The General Assembly strengthened these protections through Act 2128 of 2005, also known as Isaac's Law. The legislation was named in memory of Isaac Brian, an elementary school student in the Bryant School District who was tragically struck and killed by a driver who illegally passed his stopped school bus while students were exiting.

Under Isaac's Law, drivers on both two-lane and four-lane highways—including roads with a center turn lane—must stop for a school bus that is loading or unloading children. Drivers must remain stopped until the bus has finished receiving or discharging passengers, the stop arm has been retracted, the flashing red lights have stopped, and the bus is moving again.

Violating this law carries serious consequences. A conviction for illegally passing a stopped school bus can result in fines of up to \$2,500, in addition to court costs. During the 2021 Regular Session, the General Assembly passed Act 264 to further clarify where motorists must stop. The law requires drivers to come to a complete stop at least 30 feet from a stopped school bus. This requirement applies not only on public roadways but also on private or public property open to the public, including school driveways and parking lots.

The legislature has also worked to reduce distractions around schools. In 2019, the General Assembly passed legislation making the use of a handheld wireless phone in a school zone a primary offense, reinforcing the importance of keeping drivers focused where children are present.

As students head back to the classroom, remember these important safety tips:

- Never pass a school bus when its red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended.
- Stop at least 30 feet from the bus when it is loading or unloading students.
- Remain stopped until the flashing lights stop, the stop arm is retracted, and the bus begins moving again.
- Stay alert for children who may unexpectedly cross the street or walk alongside the roadway.
- Avoid distractions—including handheld cell phones—in school zones.

A few extra moments of patience can save a life. As school buses return to Arkansas roads, let's all do our part to make sure every child arrives safely at school and returns home safely each afternoon.