

Around Town

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**By Billy Ray McKelvy**

**De Queen Mayor**

Each year, it seems police find some drivers who are unaware it's against the law to pass a stopped school bus.

The rule has been around since 1953, but now that school has started, it's worth reviewing. According to state statute 27-51-1004, when a bus has red lights flashing and is loading or unloading, all vehicles meeting or overtaking the bus from any direction must stop. Other drivers must remain stopped until the bus has finished loading or unloading and is in motion again.

The law also applies to multi-lane highways. Now that Collin Raye Drive (U.S. Hwy. 70) has been widened to five lanes, drivers in all other lanes must stop when the bus stops. If the bus stops at an intersection, drivers on side streets must stop as well.

It is not necessary that a police officer be present to witness the violation. Bus drivers can get a license number and description of the driver and sign an affidavit that can be used to issue a citation later. The rule is intended to ensure safety of students and bus drivers take it seriously.

In district court, the fine for passing a stopped bus is \$585.

Another state law also requires drivers to stop for church buses, if they are identified with the word "church bus" and have flashing lights.

More than 2,000 students are on the school campus each day, making it one of the busiest places in De Queen. Drivers are reminded to be aware of school buses and use extra caution around them.