

Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired: Leaders across Wisconsin and the U.S. proclaim October 15 “White Cane Safety Day”

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Annual Observance Highlights Safety of All Pedestrians

White Cane Laws requiring drivers to stop for pedestrians with vision loss have been around since the 1930s. Unfortunately, many motorists still fail to obey them nearly a century later.

To raise awareness of these laws and promote pedestrian safety, advocates, allies and community leaders recognize October 15 each year as White Cane Safety Day. This month, Governor Evers and mayors across Wisconsin are issuing proclamations recognizing the occasion, highlighting the importance of the White Cane Law, and making the connection to pedestrian safety in general.

“We’re grateful to these leaders for helping spread the message that keeping pedestrians safe, especially those who are most vulnerable in traffic, is everybody’s responsibility,” said Denise Jess, executive director of the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired.

White Cane Safety Day was created in 1964 by Congressional resolution and a proclamation signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, with the goal of educating the American public about the right of way of pedestrians using a white cane or guide dog.

Every state has a White Cane Law on the books, though the details vary from state to state. Wisconsin’s statute says:

An operator of a vehicle shall stop the vehicle before approaching closer than 10 feet to a pedestrian who is carrying a cane or walking

stick which is white in color or white trimmed with red and which is held in an extended or raised position or who is using a service animal...and shall take such precautions as may be necessary to avoid accident or injury to the pedestrian.

Jess notes that White Cane Laws don't just protect people with vision loss. Measures requiring drivers to be more attentive make all pedestrians safer.

"Everybody is a pedestrian at times," Jess said. "From accessible crossing signals to properly designed curb ramps to stronger enforcement of existing laws that protect pedestrians, there's a lot communities can do to make our streets safer. Promoting greater awareness of the White Cane Law is an important piece of the puzzle. By working together, we can save lives." This year, the State of Wisconsin and these municipalities have issued or plan to issue White Cane Safety Day proclamations:

- Appleton
- Brookfield
- Eau Claire
- Green Bay
- Janesville
- Kaukauna
- La Crosse
- Madison
- Manitowoc
- Menomonie
- Middleton
- Milwaukee
- Neenah
- Oshkosh
- Portage
- Racine
- Rothschild
- Stevens Point
- Sun Prairie
- Superior
- Watertown
- Waukesha
- Wausau
- West Allis

☐ Whitewater

☐ Wisconsin Rapids

Founded in 1952, the Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired promotes the dignity and empowerment of the people of Wisconsin living with vision loss through advocacy, education and vision services. To learn more about the Council, visit www.WCBlind.org.