



## NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release*

May 18, 2018

**Contact:**

Robert Hydrick  
Communications Manager  
404.463.1751 (o) | 404.859.0141 (c)  
robert.hydrick@gohs.ga.gov

Katie Fallon  
Public Information Officer  
404-463-0611(o) || 404-463-0611 (c)  
[kfallon@gohs.ga.gov](mailto:kfallon@gohs.ga.gov)

### **Southeast Enforcement Effort Coming Between Georgia and Neighboring States**

*"Hands Across the Border" will bring together agencies from GA, FL, AL, & TN*

**(ATLANTA)** The 27<sup>th</sup> annual ***Hands Across the Border*** traffic enforcement campaign kicks off Monday, May 21 when Georgia law enforcement will join fellow officers, troopers and deputies in Alabama, Florida, and Tennessee to conduct joint roadchecks in their respective states over a 5-day period leading up to Memorial Day weekend.

State and local law enforcement in all four states will work simultaneously to take drunk and drugged drivers off the roads as well issue citations for distracted driving, speeding, being unbuckled (including car seats) and other traffic violations.

"We've been doing this for nearly 30 years and we will continue to work with our neighbors to the north, south and west to help bring down traffic fatalities across the Southeast and to get dangerous drivers off the road," Governor's Office of Highway Safety Director Harris Blackwood said. "No matter what uniform they wear, our law enforcement and their peers from neighboring states have the same goals to reduce crashes, injuries and fatalities wherever they can. This is an important effort as we get ready for Memorial Day weekend and the unofficial start of summer."

***Hands Across the Border*** started in 1991 as a friendly wager between the Georgia State Patrol and Florida Highway Patrol to see which agency could limit the number of alcohol-related traffic deaths in their state during the Labor Day travel period. Within ten years, the effort grew to all states bordering Georgia holding joint roadchecks at their state lines on the week before Labor Day with the goal of taking impaired drivers off the roads prior to the final summer holiday travel period of the year.

But beginning last year, the campaign moved to the start of the summer in order to expand the safety message and have the program begin simultaneously with Georgia's annual ***100 Days of Summer H.E.A.T.***, which stands for highway enforcement of aggressive traffic. The summer initiative is designed to highlight and enforce Georgia's traffic laws at a time when so many motorists are hitting the road for travel and summer vacations.

"Above all else, our primary goal is to get dangerous drivers off the road and to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries," GOHS Law Enforcement Director Roger Hayes said. "The southeast has so many great vacation destinations that whether folks are staying in-state, just visiting or passing through on their way to another state, we want them to

slow down, buckle up themselves and their children, drive sober and put down the phone.”

One of the reasons for campaigns like ***Hands Across the Border*** is because traffic fatalities across the southeast are still far too high. In Georgia last year, there were 1,549 traffic deaths. That’s only a slight decrease from 1,561 in 2016 after increases in both 2015 and 2016.

“Hands Across the Border shows all motorists that no matter where they’re from or where they’re going, Georgia and its neighbors care about traffic safety,” GOHS Director Blackwood said. “We’re all fighting the same fight against speeding, distracted driving, impaired driving and being unbelted. It does not matter what side of the state line you’re on. We’re all committed to keeping roads safer this summer.”

***Hands Across the Border*** will begin on Monday, May 21 with roadchecks near Savannah, followed by stops at the Florida state line near Kingsland and Valdosta, the Alabama state line in Columbus and the Tennessee state line near Ringgold.

**\*\*\*\*Media outlets can find video interviews with Director Blackwood and Roger Hayes, at the following link:\*\*\*\***  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/w9aj9nhjji3zc4p/HATB%202018%20kickoff.mpg?dl=0>

Harris Blackwood (Cut One): “The states that border Georgia are our partner, and we are proud to have that partnership. They have the same goals that we do. They want to reduce injury and fatalities on the roads of our respective states. We all work together. It is a time we realize when we meet each other at the border. We shake hands and say hello and that is an opportunity we have to reaffirm that commitment we have to safety in our states.”

Harris Blackwood (Cut 2): “Sometimes in that holiday season there is a tendency on that last day before you are leaving to go on that trip or on that last day when you are coming back, you want to stretch it out as long as you can. You have worked all day and you want to drive as long as you can to get to a specific destination. Make sure you are not tired. Make sure you are alert. Make sure you take time to get out of that car periodically. When you are coming back, give yourself plenty of time. There will be a lot of people on that return trip. We want you to watch out for everyone who is on the road.”

Roger Hayes (Cut 1): “Well, we certainly hope to curtail some of the fatalities that we are having and get people more into that mindset. We also would like to try to educate people prior to our July 1<sup>st</sup> implementation of the Hands-Free Law. We would like to be able to be out in the public and talking to different people and trying to educate them on what is going to happen on July 1<sup>st</sup>.”

Roger Hayes (Cut 2): “We have the opportunity to face-to-face talk about and share the ideas we have. We already have had several of partners ask us about the Hands-Free Law and what it means and what it is going to do. They have got to try to educate their public as well. Then the other things they are doing and we are doing to help curtail impaired driving, driving speeds down and things like that and just reducing the fatalities and serious injuries that we all have.”

For more information on Hands Across the Border or other Governor’s Office of Highway Safety programs, visit [www.gahighwaysafety.org](http://www.gahighwaysafety.org) or [www.headsUPgeorgia.com](http://www.headsUPgeorgia.com). Follow us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/gahighwaysafety](https://www.facebook.com/gahighwaysafety) or on Twitter at #gohsgeorgia.

**(END RELEASE)**