
SENATOR FOR A DAY PROGRAM

SENATE BILL

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REFERRED TO SENATE COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

Cell Phone Ban for Novice Drivers

All drivers under the age of 18 years of age will not use a cellular device in any regard. This includes the use through a wireless system.

Punishment for not complying with the law will result in a minimum fine of \$150 and an immediate loss of license for one months. In addition, for one to reclaim their license they must take an online safety course and pass to be reissued their license.

This bill shall take effect immediately.

Cellphone bans haven't made us better drivers

Emily Badger

July 18, 2014 at 3:42 p.m. EDT

Anyone who has ever used a cellphone from a driver's seat has to admit that the things are distracting. You have to root for the phone in your purse on the passenger seat when it rings. You have to pull your eyes from the road to make even a simple speed dial. If you're holding the thing to your ear, by definition you can't have two hands on the wheel.

And so banning cellphones while driving should, in theory, cut down on distraction, further reducing the things we do when we're distracted — like getting into car wrecks. Right?

A [number](#) of [studies](#), though, including [a recent one](#) from economists at the RAND Corporation, the University of Colorado Boulder and the Colorado School of Mines, suggest that cellphone bans haven't necessarily led to fewer car crashes. It's a counter-intuitive result that raises some messy questions for policy about human behavior, and exactly what we're doing in our cars.

"It took a long time for us to convince ourselves that this is what was going on, because we were so sure that this policy must have reduced accidents," says Daniel Kaffine, an economist at the University of Colorado Boulder who worked on the latest research, with Nicholas Burger and Bob Yu.

Their study, published in the journal [Transportation Research Part A](#), looked at about half a million incidents recorded by the California Highway Patrol in nine locations around the state during 2008. That July, a new California law went into effect banning hand-held cellphone use (but not texting) while driving. Kaffine and colleagues focused on the six months before and after the law went into effect, a narrow window that helped eliminate other longer-running changes that might influence crash trends, like improvements in car safety.

Their analysis controlled for additional factors like rainfall, or gas prices (which influence how much people drive). But however they sliced the data, their result was the same: They found no evidence that a ban on cellphone use in the most heavily traveled state in the country led to any reduction in traffic collisions.

How's that possible? The most obvious explanation is that Californians simply weren't following the law. But given the hundreds of thousands of accidents in the state, and the millions of miles traveled there every year, we might expect that even incremental compliance with the law would have had *some* effect. "Reductions of 5-10 percent, or something like that, would not have surprised us," Kaffine says.

Other explanations are more intriguing: Perhaps people were substituting the risky behavior of using a handheld cellphone for a behavior that may be just as risky, like talking on a Bluetooth. Some evidence suggests that it's the conversation — not the technology — that really distracts us. Or maybe drivers whose hands were freed up by the ban took the opportunity to pick up other distractions instead? CDs? Sandwiches? Lipstick?

Or here's another idea: Maybe the kind of drivers who would comply with a cellphone ban aren't the ones who were causing collisions in the first place.

"Flaunting the law is risky," Kaffine says. "So a driver who regularly behaves in risky ways in their car may just simply ignore the ban. We could see compliance going up — but it's compliance by people who are already low-risk drivers."

Maybe talking on the phone in a car is a symptom of riskiness, not the risky behavior itself. Simulated driving studies dispute this explanation. But those same simulation-based studies suggested that states would see a much larger reduction in collisions than they have so far.

None of this means that driving while using a phone isn't dangerous, nor that bans on such multi-tasking are bad policy. But something may be happening in between the theory behind these laws and the real-world implementation of them. Maybe the fines need to be higher and the enforcement stronger? Or we need to figure out who's really complying here.

"I wouldn't necessarily want to conclude that the implication is that we shouldn't have these bans in place," Kaffine says. "The implication is that we should think harder about these things, and collect more data."

Pennsylvania House just approved ban on cellphone use while driving. Here's why some are now calling it a 'step backward'

By FORD TURNER

JAN 15, 2020 | 12:29 PM

| HARRISBURG

The Pennsylvania House of Representatives has voted to ban the use of cellphones while driving in the state, but the bill included a provision that will not allow police to stop drivers simply because they see the phone being used.

A ban on using a hand-held cellphone while driving in Pennsylvania was approved by the state House of Representatives on Wednesday, but some lawmakers called it a step backward because of a provision that prohibits police from stopping motorists simply because they spot cellphone use. The bill to put the ban in place was approved by a vote of 120 to 74, and now will go to the Senate for consideration.

Its prime sponsor, Republican state Rep. Rosemary Brown of Monroe County, said on the floor of the House she was not completely happy with the final language.

An amendment approved Tuesday despite Brown's objections made the cellphone infraction a secondary offense, meaning police could not pull over a motorist simply because of the cellphone violation – the officer would have to see some other infraction first to make a stop.

[6 smartly designed cars hit speed bumps thanks to dumb flaws](#)

But the amendment also makes texting while driving a secondary offense, replacing its current status as a primary offense.

That means that if the bill becomes law, police will no longer be able to stop a motorist spotted texting while driving, as they can now.

State Rep. Mike Carroll, who is Democratic chair of the House Transportation Committee, loudly objected to the provisions on Wednesday and called the bill a step backward.

“We will have additional people texting and driving,” he said, and that is going to lead to more deaths.

“It will happen,” he said.

The amended bill maintains the primary offense status for cellphone use – talking or texting – by drivers who are 17 or younger.

But Ted Leonard, executive director of the Pennsylvania AAA Federation, said the realities of law enforcement make that application almost meaningless. He questioned how a police officer who spotted a relatively young driver texting could be sure the driver was young enough to pull over.

In fact, Leonard said, the amendment almost negated the positive effects of the bill. He could not say whether his organization would continue to support it.

The amendment that reclassified cellphone infractions as secondary offenses was sponsored by state Rep. Doyle Heffley, a Carbon County Republican.

On Tuesday, Heffley told the House enforcement of the law against texting while driving has been “ineffective and hard to enforce.”

Heffley said that every person who is driving a car and has a cellphone on their lap should not be considered a criminal. The touch screen displays built into the dashboards of many new vehicles create more dangers than holding a cellphone, he said.

Racial profiling also was part of the debate.

State Rep. Jordan Harris, a Philadelphia Democrat who is African American and supported the secondary offense classification, said there are places in Pennsylvania where people of color cannot drive and feel safe from unwarranted stops by police.

The law should not be written in a way that allows police more leeway to stop motorists for less-than-worthy reasons, Harris said.

“I am nervous when I drive at times in certain places in Pennsylvania,” Harris said.

Twenty states, including five of the six states that border Pennsylvania, have banned hand-held use of cellphones by all drivers. Others have banned hand-held use by young drivers.

Brown’s district borders New Jersey, where a ban on hand-held cellphones while driving already is in place.

Part of Brown’s motivation in sponsoring the bill was to establish continuity for drivers who cross the state line repeatedly while going to and from work, or on errands.

In an interview, she said she also wanted to make things easier for law enforcement. The existing law that bans texting while driving is difficult to enforce, she said.

Brown repeatedly stressed the dangers of cellphone use while driving. She said, "I have been working on this for five years and I believe that this is absolutely overdue."

She said she planned to work with senators to move the bill forward and "strengthen it to the best absolute product we can have so, hopefully, it can get to the governor's desk and help our roadways become more safe."

Hang Up and Drive -- Ban the Use of Cell Phones while Driving

Ban all Uses of Cell Phones while Driving

Ira Hyman Ph.D.
Posted Dec 18, 2009

"Are you drunk or just talking on your cell phone?" That's my favorite bumper sticker. One of my sons pointed it out to me recently. He and I spend a lot of time together in our car and we watch for drivers on cell phones weaving their way down the freeway. In this post, I will argue that all uses of cell phones should be banned while driving because the overwhelming weight of empirical evidence supports a complete ban. So hang up and drive!

First, several researchers have found that people having cell phone conversations perform more poorly in driving simulators than people focused only on driving. Researchers at the University of Utah, led by David Strayer, have found the cell phone users miss freeway exits, fail to properly control their speed, are slower to respond to brake lights and stop lights, fail to become aware of things they look at, and hit other cars.

Second, cell phones also disrupt performance in real world settings. My students and I have found that cell phones even disrupt walking and cause people to not see a unicycling clown (see my earlier post titled: Unicycling Clowns, Train Wrecks, and Pilots Forgetting to Land). Other researchers have observed people driving on a controlled track and found that they are slower to respond to and regularly miss signals. Only a few researchers have studied cell phone driving performance in real traffic - after all, if it is dangerous, how can you ethically ask people to do it for an experiment? Those researchers have also found poorer performance when talking on a cell phone. In addition, Virginia Tech researchers and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration have calculated that cell phone use substantially increases the likelihood of accidents.

Third, cell phones are one of the worst possible driving distractions. There are lots of other distractions in cars: radios, kids, conversations with the person next to you, food, supersized drinks, and Starbucks coffees. Should we ban all distractions? Probably not. But we should ban cell phones because cell

conversations appear to be the worst form of distraction. Researchers haven't simply compared cell phone use to driving with no distractions in those simulator studies. They've compared cell phone use to listening to the radio, listening to books on tape, and talking with a person sitting next to you (but not dealing with kids fighting in the back seat). Cell phones result in the worst performance. Talking with someone sitting next to you is often found to improve performance; probably because two sets of eyes are both aware of the road.

Fourth, the problem is not simply with holding the phone. Hands-free does not mean trouble-free. I know some states have outlawed hand-held phones and texting while continuing to allow using a hands-free phone. Unfortunately, those states have it wrong. The problem is what the head is doing, not what the hands are doing. When comparisons have been made between hand-held and hands-free phones, no differences have been found: Both forms of cell phones cause problems. The most likely reason legislatures have not banned hands-free phones is not the scientific evidence, but rather the influence of telecommunication companies.

Fifth, cell phones are causing you problems even if you think you are doing fine. Many people believe they are just as aware of the world when talking on their cell phone as when not using it. In our study of people walking while talking on a cell phone, people who missed seeing the unicycling clown thought they were doing fine. When we pointed out what they had missed, they were surprised. You think you are driving competently, but you don't notice the things you miss. You don't see what you don't see - until it is too late.

My final point concerns just how bad driving performance is when people are talking on their cell phones. Cell phone use may be as bad as drunk driving. In the one study that directly compared, the researchers found that cell phone driving was as bad as, and in some ways worse than, driving under the influence. So that bumper sticker has it right. Is that weaving driver drunk or talking on the cell phone?