

News Release



CONTACT: Dave Carlson
dave.carlson@aaaidaho.com or
call: 208-658-4401

7155 W. Denton St.
Boise, ID 83704
208-342-9391
208-342-0085 FAX

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AAA: TEEN SUPPORTERS OUTCLASS LEGISLATORS IN TEXTING ISSUE

Procedural move and 'politics' kill texting ban bill supported by teens and majority of legislators

BOISE - AAA Idaho said the Meridian Mayor's Youth Advisory Council outclassed the legislature on the issue of addressing what some consider the most dangerous driving behavior in decades — texting while driving.

"These teens spoke eloquently and directly to lawmakers about the need to ban texting among Idaho drivers," according to AAA Idaho Director of Public and Government Affairs Dave Carlson. "They reminded lawmakers that good laws can deter dangerous behaviors."

In the end, neither of two bills originating in the Idaho House or Senate survived.

AAA said most of those who supported banning texting while driving were less concerned about the specifics of legislative language and more about sending a message that the state will not condone a behavior that is likely to result in many future injury and fatal crashes.

Just prior to ending House action, Rep. Raul Labrador, Eagle, objected to a common procedural action that would have allowed for immediate consideration of HB 729, amended earlier in the evening by the Senate. The objection meant the House was required to come up with a 2/3 majority, or 47 votes, to consider the bill.

The House came up ten votes short in that effort, even though a majority had concurred with the Senate amendments moments earlier. That killed any chance of considering the bill in an up or down public vote.

"During committee hearings, I was most impressed that these teens cut through the clutter and made a clear case for passing a law without getting caught up in the politics of the moment, Carlson said. "The students and other supporters know that our inattentive driving law is not efficient. They weren't looking for a perfect law, just a good starting point to start addressing this dangerous driver distraction."

AAA Idaho expects student supporters and others are disappointed with this year's lack of legislative action, but the travel organization says it hopes supporters will show up again next year to finish the job. In the meantime, AAA hopes Idahoans will support educational and other efforts to address this risky behavior.

Wyoming became the 20th state to pass a text messaging law several weeks ago, and a dozen or more states are considering action to ban the practice.

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AAA Idaho is affiliated with AAA Oregon/Idaho, which provides 720,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive related services. AAA serves 51 million member motorists in North America.

Editor: An audio version of this news release is available on the AAA News Hotline. In Boise, call 342-9391. Outside Boise, call toll free, 1-800-999-9391. Ask for the AAA News Hotline.