

News Release



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THIRTY STATES NOW PROHIBIT TEXT MESSAGING WHILE DRIVING

Gem State needs to get serious about distracted driving, AAA Idaho says

BOISE - Delaware has become the eleventh state this year and 30th overall to outlaw text messaging by all drivers, an accomplishment not lost on AAA and other supporters of legislative action to address distracted driving.

"By passing a law banning texting while driving, thirty states have shown there is public and legislative momentum to take on this distracted driving issue," said AAA Idaho Director of Public and Government Affairs Dave Carlson. "Now it's Idaho's turn to complete what it started this past session."

A year ago, AAA pledged its support to help enact texting bans in all 50 states by 2013. In the last two years alone, almost half of all states — 12 in 2009 and 11 this year — have enacted text messaging bans for all drivers.

Idaho's Senate Bill 1352 passed 29-5, before being sent to the House. In the waning days of the session, the House wrote its own version, HB 729, which passed 51-16. But a late procedural move blocked consideration and passage of the amended version of the House bill.

"There is ample evidence that cell phones contribute to higher death and injury rates and that these vehicle crashes are preventable," Carlson said.

The continued proliferation of mobile phones — there are now 285 million wireless subscribers in the U.S. — and mounting evidence about how these distraction affect even routine driving tasks, makes legislative action crucial, AAA said.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that 11 percent of all drivers at any given time are using cell phones, and the National Safety Council estimates that one in four motor vehicle crashes involve cell phone use at the time of the crash.

Delaware's new law also makes it illegal to talk on a handheld cell phone while driving. Delaware joins California, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Oregon and Washington in permitting drivers to talk on a cell phone only with a hands-free device.

The following states and the District of Columbia now prohibit text messaging by all drivers: Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Wisconsin, Washington and Wyoming in enacting text messaging bans for all drivers.

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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.