

News Release



CONTACT: Dave Carlson
208-658-4401

For Immediate Release

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

CELL PHONE BAN FOR TEENS ADVANCES TO HOUSE FLOOR

AAA says bill provides new teeth and enforcement to keep teens off the phone while driving

BOISE - (February 27, 2013) A minor addition in the state's driver licensing law could pay dividends by encouraging teens to put down their cell phones when they're behind the wheel, or risk not getting their licenses when they expect them.

The House Transportation committee voted 9-7 Tuesday to send HB 155, legislation brought by AAA, to the House Floor with a do pass recommendation.

Citing Idaho crash statistics and studies which show that young drivers pose greater risks to themselves and others, AAA supports a change in Idaho's graduated driver licensing law (GDL) that would promote a 'no-talk, no-use' requirement until teens complete the six month practice period required by law. Using a cell phone to talk or text would short circuit the process.

The bill would add a line to the existing GDL law to prohibit the use of cell phones or other wireless devices for the purpose of calling or texting during a six-month period following the successful completion of driver training.

"A violation of the requirements necessary to complete the intermediate licensing phase for teens—including not being cited for a moving violation—would result in requiring a teen driver under the age of 17 to start the six-month process again," Carlson said.

That provision was built into original licensing law to keep novice drivers on track and is a good way to capture the attention of young drivers today, Carlson told the committee.

That the bill seems to duplicate the existing prohibition against texting while driving, which was enacted a year ago, was disputed by Mike Kane, lobbying in behalf of AAA. Kane said this bill also targets calling on a cell phone. Kane noted the bill does not criminalize behavior, add points to driving records or affect insurance rates. But it takes on distracted driving behaviors most dangerous to teens.

Supporters say the bill will influence teens to make decisions that are in their own best interest.

"This is a logical step in the process of dealing with distracted driving and teens' overrepresentation of crashes in Idaho, and it gives us a tool to better enforce our existing laws," Carlson said.

Rep. Linden Bateman's substitute motion to send the bill to the floor with a do pass recommendation passed on a 9-7 vote. AAA Idaho cited results from its November statewide survey which showed 88 percent of Idaho voters support legislative action to support banning the use of cell phones for the purpose of talking or texting for drivers 18 and younger.

#

AAA Idaho is affiliated with AAA Oregon/Idaho, providing more than 746,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive related services. AAA serves 53 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.