



Enacting a distracting driving law will save lives Vote YES on Senate Bill (SB) 359!

The Issue:

- Distracted driving poses a danger to all road users, yet Montana has no distracted driving law. Montana is the only state without a law to curb distracted driving.
- In 2023, an estimated 206 people died in traffic crash crashes in Montana.
- In the U.S. in 2022, 3,308 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver, accounting for 8 percent of all crash fatalities. An estimated 289,310 people were injured in distraction-affected crashes in 2022. It is important to note that distracted driving crashes are known to be underreported due to differences in police crash report coding, database limitations and other challenges.
- Distracted driving not only results in crashes, deaths and injuries, but it also unnecessarily expends taxpayer dollars. Nationally, crashes in which at least one driver was identified as being distracted imposed an economic cost of \$98.2 billion in 2019. In 2018 alone, distracted driving crashes cost employers nearly \$19 billion. Updated for inflation only those numbers in 2025 dollars are \$123 billion and \$24 billion respectively.
- In 2023, over two trillion text and multimedia messages were sent or received in the U.S. Mobile wireless data traffic has risen dramatically over the last decade, from 3 trillion megabytes in 2010 to 100.1 trillion in 2023.
- Research has shown that because of the degree of cognitive distraction these devices cause, the behavior of drivers using mobile phones (whether handheld or hands-free) is equivalent to the behavior of drivers at the threshold of the legal limit for alcohol in most states (0.08% blood alcohol concentration).
- Text messaging increases the risk of a safety-critical driving event by 23.2 times.
- Sending or receiving a text message causes the driver's eyes to be off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. When driving 55 miles per hour (mph), this is the equivalent of driving the entire length of a football field blind.
- A poll Advocates commissioned in December 2024 found that 96 percent of Americans are concerned about distracted driving, with 83 percent "extremely" or "very" concerned.

The Solution – Enact a Distracted Driving Law to Curb Distracted Driving:

- SB 359 will prohibit handheld use of an electronic device while driving and texting while driving (49 states have a texting ban). It also will restrict other distracting uses while driving, including, but not limited to watching videos, videoconferencing and viewing of internet data such as social media.
- These actions are consistent with the recommendations of *Using Electronic Devices While Driving: Legislations and Enforcement Implications*, by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) which comprehensively reviewed the issue of distracted driving and state distracted driving laws. The report identifies key components in a model distracted driving law including:
 - Provisions that prohibit handheld use of devices and the use of "an electronic device to stream, record, or broadcast video." This includes when the device is used hands-free.
 - Restrictions to "be in effect at all times when the vehicle is traveling on public roads, this includes at stop lights and when temporarily slowed or stopped in traffic." SB 359 prohibits use of an electronic device unless a vehicle is parked.
 - A ban on holding or supporting an electronic device.

Enacting a Distracted Driving Law Will Protect Montana Residents and Keep Families Whole—Vote YES on SB 359!