



Alaska State Legislature

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SPONSOR STATEMENT

HB 257

An Act relating to prohibiting the use of cellular telephones when driving a motor vehicle

Distracted drivers cause accidents. Current Alaska law prohibits the use of certain devices with screens (such as televisions) while driving, in order to prevent drivers from taking their focus off the road. This prohibition includes the use of cell phones for sending text messages, but excludes the use of cell phones for “verbal communication or displaying caller identification information”. HB 257 would prohibit any use of a cell phone while driving—including the use of a phone with a hands-free device—with an exception only for emergency calls. Violations would be punishable by fines of up to \$300.

As cell phones have become more widely available, the number of drivers distracted by cell phones has increased—putting more and more Alaskans in harm’s way. The use of a cell phone while driving slows a driver’s reaction time by dividing their attention. One study showed that using a cell phone while driving is as dangerous as driving drunk. This held true even for drivers using hands-free devices. Another study showed that drivers are four times more likely to get in an accident if they talk on a cell phone while driving.

Distracted drivers put themselves and everyone around them at risk. By prohibiting the use of cell phones while driving, HB 257 will make Alaska’s roads safer for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, preventing needless accidents caused by distracted drivers.

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