



REPRESENTATIVE CATHY MUÑOZ

HB22: PROHIBIT CELL PHONE USE WHILE DRIVING

If enacted, House Bill 22 will prohibit cell phone use while driving, unless a hands-free unit is being used or an emergency situation exists. The allowance for hands-free devices will accommodate commercial drivers, tour operators and others to allow flexibility in the implementation of the law. Nine states, and the District of Columbia, have prohibited the use of cell phones while driving for all drivers, twenty-eight states prohibit novice drivers – usually defined as drivers under 18 years old – and thirty states, and the District of Columbia, ban drivers from text messaging, including Alaska.

Cell phone use in the United States has been on a rapid increase in the past decade. According CTIA – The Wireless Association, there are about 293 million subscribers, representing more than 84 percent of the U.S. population, as of June 2010.

Distracted drivers create a risk to all motor vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians. Driver performance is affected by the cognitive distractions associated with cell phone tasks which typically decrease reaction time, travel speed and increase lane deviations and steering wheel movements, resulting in a higher number of crashes.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Distracted Driving Report (2009) estimates 5,474 people were killed and an additional 448,000 were injured in motor vehicle accidents that involved distracted driving. The University of Utah published a study showing motorists who talk on cell phones are as impaired as drunk drivers. As for cell phone use in Alaska, according to the Alaska 2010 Highway Safety Phone Survey 61% of Alaskan drivers talk on their cell phone while driving.

HB22 will create safer roads for all travelers and help to prevent accidents caused by distracted drivers. I urge your support in the passage of HB22.