

From: [Brian Norman](#)
To: [Senate Transportation Committee](#); [Sen. Jesse Bjorkman](#); [Sen. Löki Tobin](#); [Sen. Jesse Kiehl](#); [Sen. Bert Stedman](#)
Subject: Autonomous Vehicles - HB 215
Date: Monday, May 11, 2026 2:02:53 PM

Chairman Bjorkman and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee:

My name is Brian Norman, and I'm the Director of State Affairs at the Goldwater Institute – a free-market public policy research organization dedicated to advancing the principles of limited government, economic freedom, and individual liberty.

I'm contacting you to share some thoughts about HB 217, which would require a human operator in autonomous vehicles engaged in the transport of interstate commerce, goods, or passengers. The Goldwater Institute has a very strong experience with Autonomous Vehicles and AV policy, since we are headquartered in Arizona which is ground zero for the testing and widespread adoption of AVs in the United States. I've also published a policy report on Autonomous Vehicle policy and the benefits of widespread AV adoption, which you can find at this [link](#).

HB 217 represents a significant barrier to progress, and we urge you to exercise caution on this far-reaching legislation.

Take a drive around the greater Phoenix, Arizona area, and you will likely encounter numerous autonomous vehicles effortlessly and safely making their way around the Valley *without any driver present in the vehicle*. Driverless autonomous vehicles are a common sight in the Phoenix Metropolitan area, as residents have reliable, easy access to ride-hailing services like [Waymo](#).

The technology is working *great* in Arizona, and the state is primed to benefit even more as the AV industry blossoms in the desert. The key feature that allowed AV technology to blossom in Arizona was the state's light-touch regulatory framework that avoided pitfalls like the "driver-in" requirements seen in HB 217.

The widespread adoption of autonomous vehicle technology presents a unique opportunity to drastically increase road safety, provide better transportation options for elderly or disabled individuals, reduce traffic, and improve air quality, all while creating vast economic gains from improving efficiency in the shipping industry. Moreover, AV's have the potential to alleviate supply chain challenges, as AV trucks can ***supplement*** the driving workforce and help companies meet consumer demand for goods.

Lawmakers should avoid placing barriers like HB 217 in the way of widespread adoption of AV technology in Alaska. Instead, Alaska should look to Arizona for a permissive model framework for safely bringing AV technology into the state.

The proponents of this bill will likely make the argument that commercial AV's need a driver inside to

ensure the safety of other drivers, but the data does not back up their assertion. The latest peer-reviewed data from Waymo is instructive. According to Waymo, Driverless Waymo vehicles have driven 170 million miles through December 2025 without a human driver in the car. Compared to the average human driver over the same distance, Waymo driverless cars experienced 83 percent fewer airbag deployment crashes, 82 percent fewer injury-causing crashes and 92 percent fewer serious injury or worse crashes. At the end of the day, AV's do not drive drunk, do not get tired, and do not speed.

As the technology progresses, these numbers will only get better, and roadway safety will actually improve for all road users with the widespread adoption of AV technology, especially in the commercial trucking context.

The Goldwater Institute encourages you to avoid erecting needless regulatory barriers like HB 215 to this game-changing technology. Please let me know if you have any questions about this legislation or AV policy. I'd be happy to jump on a call to discuss.

Sincerely,
Brian Norman

Brian Norman

Director of State Affairs

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