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Bill Containing Provision to Restrict Text Messaging Passes Legislature

Sen. Ryan McKenna to Work for Stricter Provisions Next Session

JEFFERSON CITY – Today (5-15) the General Assembly gave final approval to a comprehensive crime bill ([House Bill 62](#)), which includes a provision advanced by Sen. Ryan McKenna, D-Crystal City. The measure would make it illegal for individuals 21 and under to text message on a cell phone while driving. Sen. McKenna originally filed legislation that would have banned all text messaging while driving ([SB 130](#)).

“I am pleased we were able to address this issue to some extent, and there is certainly a high percentage of teens and young adults who commit this dangerous offense,” said Sen. McKenna. “However, this distraction is no less deadly based on age, and I truly believe my original provision would have worked best to make Missouri roads safer.”

The provision would prohibit drivers 21 and younger from sending, reading, or writing text messages or electronic messages while operating a moving vehicle on highways in Missouri. If pulled over for texting, a driver could be ticketed with a moving violation. The text messaging prohibition does not apply to a person operating a motor vehicle who sends a text message to report illegal activity, summon medical or other emergency help, prevent personal injury or property damage, or to relay information between a for-hire operator and a dispatcher.

When House Bill 62 was approved by the Senate, it contained a provision banning all text messaging while driving, but was altered during a conference committee with House members.

“With little time left in the legislative session, this was the best compromise that was possible, and I do think it will serve as a first step towards ending this practice completely on our roadways,” said Sen. McKenna. “I am planning on again filing legislation during the 2010 legislative session to create the offense of texting while driving for all ages.”

House Bill 62 now moves to the governor’s desk for his signature.

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