

*Letter to the Editor from Senator Ryan McKenna: Texting While Driving*

January 6, 2010

A University of Utah study recently concluded what many of us already know; texting while driving is extremely dangerous. The study found that those sending text messages while driving were six times more likely to be involved in a crash. Texting while driving seriously decreases a driver's ability to react and pay attention, a sometimes deadly combination.

Because the dangers of texting while driving are so severe, many states have taken action by creating a specific ban on texting while driving. Eighteen states including Illinois and Arkansas, have made it illegal to text while operating a vehicle in their state. It was my hope last year that Missouri would join this group of states, but my efforts during the 2009 legislative session were blocked. In the final days of session, my provision to make texting while driving illegal on Missouri roadways was amended to only include those drivers under 21, an amendment I decided to accept in an effort to limit at least some of this dangerous practice.

The texting while driving ban for those under 21 went into effect in August, and I heard from many who wondered why the age provision was included. I agree with this sentiment, which is why I will work to expand the ban during the 2010 legislative session, which began on January 6<sup>th</sup>. It is my hope that by the time the final gavel falls in May, a bill containing a texting ban for all drivers will be on the governor's desk awaiting his signature into law.

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, I prefiled Senate Bill 701, which prohibits all drivers, regardless of age, from text messaging while operating a vehicle. Whether the measure that receives the Legislature's approval is this exact bill or another version, we must ban texting on Missouri's roads for all drivers—it is an issue of safety that knows no age limits.

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