

February 26, 2017

In regards to HB 2597__ 2017

I'm concerned with the possible restriction of electronic devices that are commonly used by many of us:

1. Navigational and mapping tools which help us travel the roads safely and efficiently.
2. Communications devices which allow drivers and others to assist each other by alerting each other of problems or dangerous situations.

I've been using mobile communications devices since 1976 for recreational purposes, charity events, emergencies, emergency preparedness drills and, often, to help keep my senses sharp while driving. There have been numerous incidents of helping people, and a couple of getting rescued myself, when phone service was not available. You can drive for miles in many parts of our state without having any cell phone coverage. Finding a hill top doesn't mean your cell phone will come to the rescue. Restricting the use of electronic devices would greatly harm the effectiveness of these devices and the number of people using them. If you can't use the equipment it doesn't make sense to have the equipment installed in your vehicle.

A few years ago, while driving around town, I was activated through amateur radio by the local ARES group due to a plane crash (Navy A6 Prowler) north of Pendleton, Oregon. I was given the approximate coordinates of the crash and I programmed them into the laptop I have mounted in my car for navigation. I quickly proceeded to the crash site. Along the way, several military vehicles saw my vehicle and followed me. The military personnel later told me that it looked like I knew where I was going so they followed me. While driving to the crash site, I kept others informed of where I was, where I was going, what I was seeing and advised others how to proceed. After arriving at the site, I learned that the no communications (Sheriff's Office or emergency services) were available at the site except for the amateur radio equipment in my car. A satellite phone worked occasionally, if you could find the right spot. Amateur radio provided communications until they decided we were not needed late the following day. This is an example of having electronic devices in your car

Everything, anything or anyone in our cars is a risk of distraction. Anything and everything outside of our vehicles can be a distraction. The driver has to manage these distractions. We don't need specific laws governing each and every possible distraction. When a driver crosses the center line, runs a stop sign or impedes traffic, we have laws which cover these infractions.

Making a law that restricts the use of equipment that helps us navigate or communicate while traveling the road safely may have the opposite effect! Can you imagine people getting out of their cars with a paper map and asking other people for help? That works on a forest service road, but it may be more than dangerous in most places.

Passing a law against electronic devices in effect will remove them from most vehicles rendering people unable to help themselves and in some places unable to call for help. It will make it more difficult for responders to help those that need it.

Many people use mobile radio communications as a way of staying alert and informed. These same people may be able to help themselves or others if needed when no other means are available.

This law will not make us safer or provide us with security. In many cases it will have the opposite effect.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely

Emery. J Heintz __ KE7YX