



PETER COURTNEY
President of the Senate

Senate Committee on Judiciary

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*TESTIMONY BY SENATOR PETER COURTNEY
SB 2
MARCH 7, 2017*

Chair Prozanski, members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Peter Courtney. I am a State Senator. I live in NE Salem.

I am here to testify in support of SB 2.

In Oregon, My Oregon:

- A distracted driving crash occurs every 2.5 hours;
- A person is injured in a distracted driving crash every 3 hours;
- A distracted driver crash involving a cell phone occurs more than 5 times a week;
- Almost 5 people are injured each week involving a distracted driver crash involving a cell phone; and
- Almost 1,500 people a month are convicted of using a cell phone while driving.

Last week, the House held a public hearing on HB 2597, which renames and expands the offence of driving while using a mobile electronic device. That bill is a result of the Distracted Driving Task Force which worked on this issue over the interim. You'll find that my bill has much of the same language as 2597 when it comes to the definitions and expansions of the law.

Where SB 2 differs is in the penalties. Distracted driving is today's drunk driving. It is time we start treating it that way.

SB 2 makes penalties for using a mobile communications device while driving the same as penalties for driving under the influence:

- One year in prison or \$6,250 fine, or both
- Increases to 5 years in prison and \$125,000 fine for multiple violations within 10 years

When I was young, drinking and driving was seen as a joke- it was just part of what you did. Today, we know better. We treat drinking and driving like the serious crime it is. Our roads and drivers are safer for it.

Now it is time we look at distracted driving. Since the popularizations of cell phones, we have treated distracted driving like it's no big deal- everyone does it. Sure, we see the person swerving or dangerously slowing down with that telltale phone glow, and we curse them under our breath.

But that doesn't apply to us. We're good at multitasking while driving. It's just one text. I'm just choosing a new Pandora station. I just need to search for the nearest Starbucks. That other guy might be a terrible driver, but I'm a pro, I've got this.

Well I'm here to tell you that we don't got this.

Between 2005 and 2012, the number of drunk driving fatalities per person decreased by 28%. Meanwhile, between 2005 and 2008, the number of fatalities caused by distracted driving increased 28%.

Multiple studies have indicated that driving while using a cell phone is equally as dangerous as driving while intoxicated. Yet, around 20% of high school students said they have ridden with a drunk driver, while a full 50% of all adults and teenagers said that they have ridden in a car while the driver was texting.

10% of crash fatalities involving drivers 15-19 years old were reported as distracted at the time of the crash.

Distracted driving related injuries and deaths are becoming an epidemic. Until we, as a state, take distracted driving as seriously as drunk driving we aren't going to be able to change behavior.