

**Senate Study Bill 3052 - Introduced**

SENATE FILE \_\_\_\_\_  
BY (PROPOSED COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION BILL BY  
CHAIRPERSON ZUMBACH)

**A BILL FOR**

1 An Act relating to the operation of driverless-capable  
2 vehicles, including associated civil and criminal liability,  
3 and making penalties applicable.  
4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF IOWA:

1 Section 1. Section 321.515, subsection 1, Code 2026, is  
2 amended to read as follows:

3 1. a. Except as provided in paragraph "b", a  
4 driverless-capable vehicle may operate on the public highways  
5 of this state without a conventional human driver physically  
6 present in the vehicle, if the vehicle meets all of the  
7 following conditions:

8 ~~a.~~ (1) The vehicle is capable of achieving a minimal risk  
9 condition if a malfunction of the automated driving system  
10 occurs that renders the system unable to perform the entire  
11 dynamic driving task within the system's intended operational  
12 design domain, if any.

13 ~~b.~~ (2) While in driverless operation, the vehicle is  
14 capable of operating in compliance with the applicable traffic  
15 and motor vehicle safety laws and regulations of this state  
16 that govern the performance of the dynamic driving task, unless  
17 an exemption has been granted to the vehicle by the department.

18 ~~c.~~ (3) The vehicle has been certified by the vehicle's  
19 manufacturer to be in compliance with all applicable federal  
20 motor vehicle safety standards, except to the extent an  
21 exemption has been granted for the vehicle under applicable  
22 federal law or by the national highway traffic safety  
23 administration.

24 b. A driverless-capable vehicle transporting hazardous  
25 material shall not operate without a conventional human driver.

26 Sec. 2. Section 321.515, subsection 2, paragraph b, Code  
27 2026, is amended to read as follows:

28 b. An automated driving system, while engaged, shall be  
29 ~~designed to~~ operate within the system's operational design  
30 domain and in compliance with the applicable traffic and  
31 motor vehicle safety laws and regulations of this state that  
32 govern the performance of the dynamic driving task, unless an  
33 exemption has been granted to the vehicle by the department.

34 Sec. 3. NEW SECTION. 321.515A Civil and criminal liability.

35 1. The owner of a driverless-capable vehicle is deemed to

1 be operating the vehicle while the automated driving system is  
2 engaged and shall be liable for all of the following:

3 a. Personal injury, death, or property damage that results  
4 in connection with the operation of the vehicle.

5 b. Violations of traffic or motor vehicle safety laws and  
6 regulations of this state, including but not limited to as  
7 described in section 321.517.

8 2. A person who modifies an automated driving system of a  
9 driverless-capable vehicle without the manufacturer's consent  
10 shall be liable for any damage related to the operation of the  
11 vehicle. However, if the owner of the vehicle directed the  
12 person to modify the system, the owner shall be liable.

13 EXPLANATION

14 The inclusion of this explanation does not constitute agreement with  
15 the explanation's substance by the members of the general assembly.

16 Under current law, a driverless-capable vehicle equipped  
17 with an automated driving system and meeting certain  
18 requirements is authorized to operate on highways while  
19 performing all real-time operational and tactical functions  
20 (dynamic driving task) regardless of whether a conventional  
21 human driver is present in the vehicle. The operation of a  
22 driverless-capable vehicle is governed by Code sections 321.514  
23 through 321.519 and all applicable traffic and motor vehicle  
24 safety laws.

25 This bill prohibits a driverless-capable vehicle  
26 transporting hazardous material from operating without a  
27 conventional human driver. "Hazardous material" is defined for  
28 purposes of Code chapter 321 as a substance or material which  
29 has been determined by the U.S. secretary of transportation to  
30 be capable of posing an unreasonable risk to health, safety,  
31 and property when transported in commerce, and which has been  
32 so designated. By operation of law, a person who violates this  
33 provision commits a simple misdemeanor pursuant to Code section  
34 321.482. A simple misdemeanor is punishable by confinement for  
35 no more than 30 days and a fine of at least \$105 but not more

1 than \$855.

2 Under current law, an automated driving system that is  
3 capable of performing the entire dynamic driving task must be  
4 designed to operate within the system's operational design  
5 domain in compliance with the applicable traffic and motor  
6 vehicle safety laws and regulations that govern the performance  
7 of the dynamic driving task, unless an exemption has been  
8 granted to the vehicle by the department of transportation.  
9 The bill rephrases this provision to require the system to  
10 operate within the system's operational design domain rather  
11 than be designed to operate in that manner.

12 The bill imputes liability to the owner of a  
13 driverless-capable vehicle for personal injury, death,  
14 or property damage that results in connection with the  
15 operation of the vehicle and for violations of traffic or motor  
16 vehicle safety laws and regulations. A person who modifies  
17 an automated driving system of a driverless-capable vehicle  
18 without the manufacturer's consent is liable for any damage  
19 related to the operation of the vehicle, unless the owner of  
20 the vehicle directed the person to modify the system, in which  
21 case the owner is liable.