

DEPARTMENT: IOWA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

Proposal #	Title	Summary
	Hands Free Law	<p><u>Background (e.g. current law or status):</u> The Iowa State Patrol and the Governor’s Traffic Safety Bureau have identified distracted driving as their greatest highway safety concern due to a sharp increase in the number of crashes and deaths related to cell phone use while driving.</p> <p>Iowa Code § 321.276 currently prohibits a driver from using a cell phone to send electronic messages, but permits cell phone use for a variety of other tasks. It is difficult to enforce the current law and change driver behavior because it is virtually impossible to discern how the cell phone is being used. Furthermore, the level of distraction is not due to the task being performed but rather the mere use of a cell phone while driving.</p> <p>In 2017, 3,166 people were killed by distracted driving in the United States. Currently, 20 states and Washington D.C. prohibit ALL DRIVERS from using cell phones while driving, including Illinois and Minnesota. (NHTSA, 2017)</p> <p><u>Solution:</u> Amend Iowa Code § 321.276 to ban cell phone use while driving with exemptions to use an electronic communication device in hands-free mode, for members of a public safety agency performing official duties, for health care professionals in the course of emergency situations, for the purpose of reporting an emergency situation, or by pressing a single button to initiate or terminate a voice communication.</p> <p><u>Goal:</u> By completely banning cell phone use, law enforcement will have better means to combat distracted driving. This should further the goal of lowering the number of our annual traffic fatalities to below 300.</p> <p><u>Fiscal and Jobs Impact:</u> N/A</p> <p><u>Has proposal been pre-cleared before? If so, prior legislative history?</u> Senate File 76 was introduced last year but failed to move forward after recommended passage from subcommittee on 02/26/2020.</p>