

In the state of Missouri, if someone is under the age of twenty-two and caught texting and driving, they can be punished. If another person is over the age of twenty-one, they will not be charged with texting and driving. This is completely unacceptable. According to the Missouri Department of Insurance, in 2012 alone, 421,000 drivers were injured in crashes involving distracted driving.

While it is typically young adults between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five that are more likely to get into an accident involving texting and driving (or distracted driving), that doesn't mean that anyone over the age of twenty-two gets a free pass when it comes to texting and driving. As a state, we shouldn't ban this behavior in teenagers and young adults then let it slide for adults. No matter how experienced a driver is, that doesn't mean they're the world's most capable driver. After all, who is?

Not only should the age range be much wider (preferably illegal for all drivers, regardless of age or license status), the punishment for texting and driving needs to be stricter. If a driver were to go six or seven miles over the speed limit and get pulled over by a state trooper, the fine would be about \$83 and three points on their driving record. The same goes for if the driver is pulled over by a municipal officer (Springfield Traffic Tickets). Isn't it odd that you can get more points on your record for going anywhere from five to ten miles over the speed limit, which is considerably less deadly than distracted driving? And on top of that, like wearing a seatbelt, texting and driving is only a secondary offense. So even if a police officer were to see you doing it, they can't pull you over unless you do something else illegal (KFVS12).

Let's briefly expand on the world of car crashes caused by drivers going over the speed limit. According to the Missouri State Highway Patrol's Statistical Analysis Center, in 2012, 9,712 drivers were injured in speed-related car crashes. 2012 isn't even the year with the most injuries due to speeding (back in 2005 there were 15,150 related injuries). But for the sake of statistics, we'll provide those of the same year. Now, let's refer back to one of the first statistics given. 421,000 drivers were injured in distracted driving crashes in 2012. Just 2012. So based on these two statistics alone, wouldn't it make more sense for distracted driving to carry a harsher punishment? After all, only 411,288 more drivers were hurt in distracted driving cases.

Currently, lawmakers in the Missouri House and Senate have proposed a total of six bills that would completely ban texting and driving for all ages (KFVS12). This would remove Missouri from the list of three states who allow texting and driving, the other two being Montana and Arizona (Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and Highway Loss Data Institute). The new bills in the House/Senate would make texting and driving illegal for all ages, and the fine would be \$50 and doubled in school or work zones, according to Missouri Senator Wayne Wallingford from Cape Girardeau.

Even though we here at the Eagle's View are 100% for banning texting and driving, the proposed punishments for texting and driving are simply not enough. If a driver were going 1-5 miles an hour over the limit and was pulled over, the fine is \$73 (Springfield Traffic Tickets). Compared to the proposed penalty, lawmakers are implying that speeding, the less dangerous (albeit still dangerous) offense of speeding is \$23 more dangerous than texting and driving. Since texting and driving is statistically more dangerous, the minimum punishment three-four points on a driver's record, \$750 (doubled in work zones), and possible jail time depending on the offense (per Utah's law). Texting while driving should also be a misdemeanor, not a

secondary offense, as texting and driving can have deadly outcomes (according to Alaska's law).

Not texting and driving in today's culture is widely considered common sense, and seeing that some drivers tend to lack the basic courtesy and caution to stay off their phones, we at the Eagle's View strongly believe harsher punishments are needed to protect not only drivers but the people around them. No one should have their life cut short because you have to snap your best friend back.