

Texting while driving is a serious problem all around the country. In a society built around speed and mobility, the combination of automobiles and cell-phones is a dangerous one.

Nationally, in 2009 alone, 5,474 people were killed in the U.S. in distracted driving accidents, according to federal data. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that another 448,000 were injured. Of the fatal crashes, 995 involved distraction caused by a cell phone.

So distracted driving is a problem everywhere. That's why over 30 states have passed some form of ban on texting while driving. But the problem is particularly acute in Pennsylvania, which has long resisted passing statewide laws to restrict drivers from texting or talking while behind the wheel.

Proposed bills to create texting limitations have failed before in the Pennsylvania legislature. In 2011, such proposals are back again. Senate Bill 314 calls for texting while driving to be made a primary offense. When something is a primary offense, law enforcement officers do not have to observe another, different violation before pulling someone over.

Senate Bill 314 also contains a restriction on the number of passengers that someone in their first six months of driving may carry.

The bill passed the Senate in June and now moves to the House. Legislators there have expressed concern not only about texting while driving and teen drivers, but also other, more traditional forms of distracted driving. Those older forms include things like reading, eating and even applying personal grooming (such as applying makeup).

State Rep. Todd Rock is hopeful that the House will take action on distracted driving. "I know there is a desire to pass something that addresses texting and cellphone use," he said. "I believe that's going to happen."

Let's hope it does. It's high time.

Source: "Pa. legislators consider texting while driving law," Herald-Mail.com, 7-23-11