

State of Kansas  
Senate Chamber

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COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

RANKING MINORITY: TRANSPORTATION  
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EDUCATION FINANCE  
JOINT COMMITTEE: KANSAS SECURITY  
PENSIONS, INVESTMENTS  
AND BENEFITS

Nearly 303 million people in the United States have cell phones. At any given moment during the day more than 800,000 vehicles are being driven by someone using hand-held cell phones.

A total of 47 states have a texting ban but only 16 states have a ban on phone usage while driving and hands-free devices for all drivers. Using a cell phone while driving caused an estimated 1.5 million car crashes in the US in 2017, and 4,637 people died in car crashes in 2018 due to cell phone use or electronic device use. That had an economic impact of \$129 billion.

Texting is six times more likely to cause a car accident than drunk driving. In 2020 getting stopped texting can cause your insurance rate to go up anywhere from 23% to 63%. Insurance penalties have gone up 8,000% for distracted driving.

SB459 prohibits a person driving on a highway from holding a wireless telecommunications device and puts in place a fine for such action. I have addressed this issue in the past with bill introductions, but SB 459 is a reflection of what so many states across the country have already done to address this exponentially growing problem. Our constituents need to know that the Kansas legislature takes distracted driving seriously and are willing to address this issue for the road safety of all Kansans.

The statistics I shared make it clear that phone use while driving is more than a problem, it is a pandemic.

Several weeks ago in Kansas City, KS a school crossing guard was hit and killed at 7:55 am by a 21-year-old driver who was exceeding the speed limit and didn't see him. Now as the principal at Christ the King school, Cathy Fithian, explained: There is a flashing light 100 feet west of the crossing, a school crossing sign, white striping on the street and a crossing guard holding a sign and wearing a yellow fluorescent vest.

This is an on-going investigation so distractions has not been ruled on at this time. Mr. Nill had held the position for five years and in losing his life he saved the lives of two boys.

Ms. Fithian has been an educator for 35 ears at Christ the King School and feels that in general people ignore signs on streets or buses and she is concerned for all the children and adults who walk on our streets. She is also worried that people will go back to ignoring the signs.

We can't change the outcome of this accident. Mr. Nill is dead but SB459 could help law enforcement to have the tools to fine and to educate. I ask that you support the passage of SB459.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Pettey".

Senator Pat Pettey