

Outlawing texting while driving statewide headed in right direction

Texting and driving is once again a hot topic in the state legislature, as some politicians are pushing for a ban. It's already against the law in El Paso, and it should be across the rest of the state.

The numbers are alarming. National statistics reveal that more than 3,300 people lost their lives in distracted driving accidents in 2012. More than 421,000 were injured.

Last year, El Paso police cited more than 10,300 drivers for breaking the texting law. Fines range from \$200 to \$500.

Studies from comScore report show that 75 percent of Americans own a smartphone. In a 2013 study by goCharge, 81 percent of cell phone owners use their phones to send or receive text messages. Sixty percent access the internet, 52 percent send or receive emails, and 49 percent use their phones to get directions.

Those against such a law cite government interference with daily life. Back in 2011, former governor Rick Perry did not sign the bill because it was an "intrusion on people's freedom." It's a small intrusion when it could prevent serious injury or death.

Distracted driving is especially an issue for young drivers. Ten percent



of those involved in fatal accidents were distracted. Statewide, drivers with permits are not allowed to use hand-held cell phones in the first six months. Drivers under 18 are not allowed to use wireless communication devices. School bus drivers cannot use cell phones while driving if students are present, and hand-held devices cannot be used while driving in a school zone. These laws are a start, but they are not enough to keep 1,600,000 accidents from happening each year [National Safety Council].

In the 21st century, car manufacturers should install devices like, Cellcontrol, to prevent anyone from using their phones while driving. It's a wireless device that is

connected to phones via Bluetooth. When the car is in motion, it will not unlock when it's located anywhere in the driver's seat.

Driving has its dangers, but worrying about someone texting and driving shouldn't be one of them. Parents shouldn't have to tell doctors to take their child off of life support after a horrible accident, caused by a simple text message.

In 44 other states, texting and driving is against the law. Texas needs to go down that same road. Governor Greg Abbott, who took over in January, should pass this bill. It's not government intrusion, it's saving a life.