

2020 Regular Session

SENATE BILL NO. 50

BY SENATOR MCMATH

TRAFFIC. Prohibits use of a handheld wireless telecommunications device by a person when operating a motor vehicle upon any public roadway in this state. (8/1/20)

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 15:571.11(A)(4) and R.S. 32:300.5 and to repeal R.S. 32:289.1,  
3 300.6, 300.7, and 300.8, relative to motor vehicles; to prohibit the use of a handheld  
4 wireless telecommunication device by a person when operating a motor vehicle upon  
5 any public roadway in this state; to provide for definitions; to provide for exceptions;  
6 and to provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. R.S. 15:571.11(A)(4) is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

9 §571.11. Dispositions of fines and forfeitures

10 A.(1) \* \* \*

11 (4) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, twenty-five dollars  
12 from all fines collected pursuant to R.S. 32:300.5, ~~300.6, 300.7, and 300.8~~ shall be  
13 distributed to the indigent defender fund of the judicial district in which the citation  
14 was issued.

15 Section 2. R.S. 32:300.5 is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

16 §300.5. Use of **handheld** wireless telecommunications devices; ~~for text messaging~~  
17 ~~and social networking~~; prohibited; **definitions; exceptions**

1           A.(1) ~~Except as provided in Subsection B of this Section, no person shall~~  
2 ~~operate any motor vehicle upon any public road or highway of this state while using~~  
3 ~~a wireless telecommunications device to write, send, or read a text-based~~  
4 ~~communication. For purposes of this Section, a person shall not be deemed to be~~  
5 ~~writing, reading, or sending a text message if the person reads, selects, or enters a~~  
6 ~~telephone number or name in a wireless telecommunications device for the purpose~~  
7 ~~of making a telephone call.~~

8           (2) ~~No person shall operate any motor vehicle upon any public road or~~  
9 ~~highway of this state while using a wireless telecommunications device to access,~~  
10 ~~read, or post to a social networking site.~~

11           (3)(a) ~~"Wireless telecommunications device" means a cellular telephone, a~~  
12 ~~text-messaging device, a personal digital assistant, a stand-alone computer, or any~~  
13 ~~other substantially similar wireless device that is readily removable from the vehicle~~  
14 ~~and is used to write, send, or read text or data through manual input. A "wireless~~  
15 ~~telecommunications device" shall not include any device or component that is~~  
16 ~~permanently affixed to a motor vehicle. It does not include citizens band radios,~~  
17 ~~citizens band radio hybrids, commercial two-way radio communication devices,~~  
18 ~~two-way radio transmitters or receivers used by licensees of the Federal~~  
19 ~~Communication Commission in the Amateur Radio Service, or electronic~~  
20 ~~communication devices with a push-to-talk function.~~

21           (b) ~~"Write, send, or read a text-based communication" means using a wireless~~  
22 ~~telecommunications device to manually communicate with any person by using a~~  
23 ~~text-based communication referred to as a text message, instant message, or~~  
24 ~~electronic mail.~~

25           (c) ~~"Access, read, or post to a social networking site" means using a wireless~~  
26 ~~telecommunications device to access, read, or post on such device to any web-based~~  
27 ~~service that allows individuals to construct a profile within a bounded system,~~  
28 ~~articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and communicate~~  
29 ~~with other members of the site.~~

1           B. ~~The provisions of Paragraph (A)(1) of this Section shall not apply to the~~  
2 ~~following:~~

3           ~~(1) Any law enforcement officer, firefighter, or operator of an authorized~~  
4 ~~emergency vehicle while engaged in the actual performance of his official duties.~~

5           ~~(2) An operator of a moving motor vehicle using a wireless~~  
6 ~~telecommunications device to:~~

7           ~~(a) Report illegal activity.~~

8           ~~(b) Summon medical or other emergency help.~~

9           ~~(c) Prevent injury to a person or property.~~

10          ~~(d) Relay information between a transit or for-hire operator and that~~  
11 ~~operator's dispatcher, in which the device is permanently affixed to the vehicle.~~

12          ~~(e) Navigate using a global positioning system.~~

13          ~~(3) A physician or other health care provider using a wireless~~  
14 ~~telecommunications device to communicate with a hospital, health clinic or the~~  
15 ~~office of the physician, or to otherwise provide for the health care of an individual~~  
16 ~~or medical emergency through a text-based communication.~~

17          C.~~(1) The first violation of the provisions of this Section shall be punishable~~  
18 ~~by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars.~~

19          ~~(2) Each subsequent violation shall be punishable by a fine of not more than~~  
20 ~~one thousand dollars.~~

21          ~~(3) If the person is involved in a crash at the time of violation, then the fine~~  
22 ~~shall be equal to double the amount of the standard fine imposed in this Subsection~~  
23 ~~and the law enforcement officer investigating the crash shall indicate on the written~~  
24 ~~accident form that the person was using a wireless telecommunications device at the~~  
25 ~~time of the crash.~~

26          ~~(4) Any violation of this Section shall constitute a moving violation.~~

27          **A. As used in this Section, the following terms shall have the meanings**  
28 **ascribed to them in this Section, unless the context clearly indicates a different**  
29 **meaning:**

1           **(1) "Access, read, or post to a social networking site" means using a**  
2           **wireless telecommunications device to access, read, or post on a device to any**  
3           **web-based service that allows individuals to construct a profile within a**  
4           **bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a**  
5           **connection, and communicate with other members of the site.**

6           **(2) "Engage in a call" means talking or listening during a voice**  
7           **transmission on a wireless telecommunications device or manually entering**  
8           **names or phone numbers to initiate a call.**

9           **(3) "Hands-free wireless telephone" means a wireless**  
10           **telecommunications device that has an internal feature or function, or that is**  
11           **equipped with an attachment or addition, whether or not permanently part of**  
12           **such telephone, by which a user engages in a conversation without the use of**  
13           **either hand, however, this definition shall not preclude the use of either hand**  
14           **to activate, deactivate, or initiate a function of the telephone.**

15           **(4) "Wireless telecommunications device" means a cellular telephone,**  
16           **a text-messaging device, a personal digital assistant, a stand-alone computer, or**  
17           **any other substantially similar wireless device that is readily removable from**  
18           **the vehicle and is used to write, send, or read text or data through manual**  
19           **input. "Wireless telecommunications device" shall not mean any device or**  
20           **component that is permanently affixed to a motor vehicle, nor shall it mean a**  
21           **cellular telephone used hands-free, an electronic communication device used**  
22           **hands-free, citizens band radios, citizens band radio hybrids, commercial**  
23           **two-way radio communications devices, two-way radio transmitters or receivers**  
24           **used by licensees of the Federal Communication Commission in the Amateur**  
25           **Radio Service, or electronic communication devices with a push-to-talk**  
26           **function.**

27           **(5) "Write, send, or read a text-based communication" means using a**  
28           **wireless telecommunications device to manually communicate with any person**  
29           **by using a text-based communication referred to as a text message, instant**

1 message, or electronic mail.

2 B.(1) Except as provided in Subsection C of this Section, no person shall  
3 operate a motor vehicle upon any public road or highway in this state while  
4 using any wireless telecommunication device to access, read, or post to a social  
5 networking site, to engage in a call, or to write, send, or read a text-based  
6 communication.

7 (2) Using a wireless telecommunications device shall include:

8 (a) Engaging in a call.

9 (b) Writing, sending, or reading a text-based communication.

10 (c) Accessing, reading, or posting to a social networking site.

11 (d) Accessing, viewing, posting, editing, or creating a video, photograph,  
12 or other image.

13 (e) Accessing, reading, viewing, composing, browsing, transmitting,  
14 saving, or retrieving electronic data from any application other than media.

15 (f) Using any other application or feature of a device by making manual  
16 entries of letters, numbers, symbols, or any combination thereof.

17 C.(1) The provisions of Subsection B of this Section shall not apply to  
18 any of the following persons while they are performing their official duties:

19 (a) A law enforcement officer.

20 (b) A firefighter.

21 (c) The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle.

22 (2) The provisions of Subsection B of this Section shall not apply to a  
23 person who uses a wireless telecommunications device to do any of the  
24 following:

25 (a) Report a traffic collision, medical emergency, other emergency, or  
26 serious road hazard.

27 (b) Report a situation in which the person believes that an individual is  
28 in jeopardy of serious bodily injury or death.

29 (c) Relay information between a transit or for-hire operator, including

1 a transportation network company driver, and that operator's dispatcher, in  
2 which the device is affixed to the vehicle.

3 (d) Navigate using a global positioning system.

4 (e) Operate a wireless telecommunications device while the motor  
5 vehicle is lawfully parked.

6 D.(1) Any violation of this Section shall constitute a moving violation.

7 (2)(a) The first violation of the provisions of this Section shall be  
8 punishable by a fine of not more than one hundred dollars or community  
9 service as determined by the court.

10 (b) The second violation of the provisions of this Section shall be  
11 punishable by a fine of not more than three hundred dollars.

12 (c) Each subsequent violation of the provisions of this Section shall be  
13 punishable by a fine of not more than three hundred dollars and a suspension  
14 of the person's driver's license for a period of thirty days.

15 (d) If a person is involved in a collision at the time of the violation of this  
16 Section, the fine shall be equal to double the amount of the standard fine  
17 imposed in this Subsection. The law enforcement officer investigating the  
18 collision shall indicate on the written accident report that the person was using  
19 a wireless telecommunications device at the time of the collision.

20 (3) Use of a wireless telecommunications device for any of the purposes  
21 provided for in Subsection C of this Section shall be an affirmative defense to  
22 a violation of this Section and the alleged violator may produce documentary  
23 or other evidence in support of this defense.

24 Section 3. R.S. 32:289.1, 300.6, 300.7, and 300.8 are hereby repealed.

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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Sharon F. Lyles.

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## DIGEST

SB 50 Original

2020 Regular Session

McMath

Present law distributes \$25 of all fines collected pursuant to R.S. 32:300.5, 300.6, 300.7, and 300.8 to the indigent defender fund of the judicial district where the citation was issued.

Proposed law retains present law only as to fines collected pursuant to R.S. 32:300.5.

Present law prohibits the use of a cellular telephone for any purpose by any person, regardless of age, issued a first driver's license for a period of one year commencing from the date of issuance of his first driver's license [R.S. 32:289.1]; the use of wireless telecommunication devices for text messaging and social networking for all drivers [R.S. 32:300.5]; prohibits the use of wireless telecommunication devices to engage in a call by drivers who hold a Class "E" learner's license or intermediate license unless the telecommunications device is a hands-free wireless telephone [R.S. 32:300.6]; prohibits the use of wireless telecommunication devices to engage in a call or write, send, or read a text-based communication by minors [persons 17 years of age or younger] [R.S. 32:300.7]; and prohibits the use of handheld telecommunication devices by drivers in a school zone during school hours [R.S. 32:300.8] when operating a motor vehicle upon a public road or highway.

Proposed law amends present law [R.S. 32:300.5] to extend the prohibition to the use of wireless telecommunication devices for text messaging and social networking to include handheld use of a telecommunication device to engage in a call to all drivers who operate a motor vehicle on a public roadway in this state [R.S. 32:300.5] and repeals present law specific to certain classes of drivers [R.S. 32:300.6 and 300.7] and to drivers in a school zone [R.S. 32:300.8].

Present law provides that "access, read, or post to a social networking site" means using a wireless telecommunications device to access, read, or post on such device to any web-based service that allows individuals to construct a profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and communicate with other members of the site.

Proposed law retains present law.

Proposed law adds definition for "engage in a call" to mean talking or listening during a voice transmission on a wireless telecommunications device or manually entering names or phone numbers to initiate a call.

Proposed law adds definition for "hands-free wireless telephone" to mean a wireless telecommunications device that has an internal feature or function, or that is equipped with an attachment or addition, whether or not permanently part of such telephone, by which a user engages in a conversation without the use of either hand, provided, however, this definition shall not preclude the use of either hand to activate, deactivate, or initiate a function of the telephone.

Present law provides that "wireless telecommunications device" means a cellular telephone, a text-messaging device, a personal digital assistant, a stand alone computer, or any other substantially similar wireless device that is readily removable from the vehicle and is used to write, send, or read text or data through manual input. A "wireless telecommunications device" shall not include any device or component that is permanently affixed to a motor vehicle. It does not include citizens band radios, citizens band radio hybrids, commercial two-way radio communication devices, two-way radio transmitters or receivers used by

licensees of the Federal Communication Commission in the Amateur Radio Service, or electronic communication devices with a push-to-talk function.

Proposed law amends present law to add that a "wireless telecommunications device" shall not mean a cellular telephone used hands-free or an electronic communication device used hands-free.

Present law provides that "write, send, or read a text-based communication" means using a wireless telecommunications device to manually communicate with any person by using a text-based communication referred to as a text message, instant message, or electronic mail.

Proposed law retains present law.

Present law provides with some exceptions that (1) no person shall operate any motor vehicle upon any public road or highway of this state while using a wireless telecommunications device to write, send, or read a text-based communication, and that a person shall not be deemed to be writing, reading, or sending a text message if the person reads, selects, or enters a telephone number or name in a wireless telecommunications device for the purpose of making a telephone call, and that (2) no person shall operate any motor vehicle upon any public road or highway of this state while using a wireless telecommunications device to access, read, or post to a social networking site.

Proposed law amends present law to provide that with some exceptions that no person shall operate a motor vehicle upon any public roadway in this state while using any wireless telecommunication device to access, read, or post to a social networking site, to engage in a call, or to write, send, or read a text-based communication. Proposed law adds that using a wireless telecommunications device shall include:

- (1) Engaging in a call.
- (2) Writing, sending, or reading a text-based communication.
- (3) Accessing, reading, or posting to a social networking site.
- (4) Accessing, viewing, posting, editing, or creating a video, photograph, or other image.
- (5) Accessing, reading, viewing, composing, browsing, transmitting, saving, or retrieving electronic data from any application other than media.
- (6) Using any other application or feature of such a device by making manual entries of letters, numbers, symbols, or any combination thereof.

Present law provides that it shall not apply to:

- (1) Any law enforcement officer, firefighter, or operator of an authorized emergency vehicle while engaged in the actual performance of his official duties.
- (2) An operator of a moving motor vehicle using a wireless telecommunications device to:
  - (a) Report illegal activity.
  - (b) Summon medical or other emergency help.
  - (c) Prevent injury to a person or property.
  - (d) Relay information between a transit or for-hire operator and that operator's dispatcher, in which the device is permanently affixed to the vehicle.



- (e) Navigate using a global positioning system.
- (3) A physician or other healthcare provider using a wireless telecommunications device to communicate with a hospital, health clinic or the office of the physician, or to otherwise provide for the healthcare of an individual or medical emergency through a text-based communication.

Proposed law amends present law exceptions to provide that proposed law:

- (1) Does not apply to any of the following persons while they are performing their official duties:
  - (a) A law enforcement officer.
  - (b) A firefighter.
  - (c) The operator of an authorized emergency vehicle.
- (2) Does not apply to a person:
  - (a) Who reports a traffic collision, medical emergency, other emergency, or serious road hazard.
  - (b) Who reports a situation where the person believes that an individual is in jeopardy of serious bodily injury or death.
  - (c) Who relays information between a transit or for-hire operator, including a transportation network company driver, and that operator's dispatcher, in which the device is affixed to the vehicle.
  - (d) Who navigates using a global positioning system.
  - (e) Who operates a wireless telecommunications device while the motor vehicle is lawfully parked.

Proposed law removes present law exceptions which were applicable to persons using a wireless telecommunications device to report a situation when a person believed his own personal safety was in jeopardy, or to avert the perpetration or potential perpetration of a criminal act against the driver or another person.

Present law provides that any violation of its provisions is a moving violation.

Proposed law retains present law.

Present law provides penalties for violation of its provisions as follows:

- (1) The first violation is punishable by a fine of \$500.
- (2) Each subsequent violation is punishable by a fine of not more than \$1,000.
- (3) Double the amount of the standard fine is imposed if a person is involved in a collision at the time of the violation and the law enforcement officer investigating the collision is required to indicate on the written accident report that the person was using a wireless telecommunications device at the time of the collision.

Proposed law amends present law by reducing the fine for a first violation from \$500 to not more than \$100 and adds an option for community service.

Proposed law amends present law to add a second violation that is punishable by a fine of not more than \$300 and to add that any subsequent violation is punishable by a fine of not more than \$300 and a 30-day suspension of the driver's license.

Proposed law provides that use of a wireless telecommunications device for any of the exceptions is an affirmative defense to a violation and the alleged violator may produce documentary or other evidence in support of this defense.

Effective August 1, 2020.

(Amends R.S. 15:571.11(A)(4) and R.S. 32:300.5; repeals R.S. 32:289.1, 300.6, 300.7, and 300.8)