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Texting While Driving Increasing in Severity

A bill introducing a ban on driving while texting has received bipartisan support as it passed its first hurdle on the way to becoming law in the state of Florida. For some lawmakers in Florida, simply issuing a citation or traffic ticket for texting while driving is not enough when there have been reported accidents because of texting negligence that have resulted in deaths. In such cases, some Florida politicians are calling for a charge of vehicular homicide to be introduced when drivers causing accidents are known to have been texting. This comes with a close regard to the fact that many studies have shown drivers engaged in texting are more oblivious to their surroundings on the road than those impaired by drugs or alcohol that are behind the wheel.

The initial bill calling for a ban on texting while driving was sponsored by the Republican Senator Nancy Detert, whom pushed the bill through the Senate Transportation Committee in early February of 2013. It remains unclear whether the ban will make its way through Florida's legislative process and become law just yet, and in this form.

Because of the concern amongst some residents of Florida about the possible failure of the ban on driving while texting, the second piece of legislation increasing the penalty for causing an accident resulting in a death while texting was introduced. Democrats Darren Soto and Irv Slosberg have introduced the bill, which increases the possible sentence for causing a death while driving and texting to vehicular homicide; currently drivers causing a fatal accident while texting can receive charges that are on par with crimes that many would think are far less significant.

State Senator Soto claims that there is no justification for drivers who cause a death while texting not going to jail; Senator Soto believes the legislation he has introduced is separate to the proposed law on driving while texting as drivers at fault for the death of another individual should go to jail. In Florida, no legislation has been passed to place a ban on driving while texting, meaning police officers are not able to successfully prosecute drivers causing an accident for anything other than a traffic citation in many instances.

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