

Why the government should ban cellphones while driving

Kasey Panetta, Managing Editor



This term “nanny state” is an interesting one. It’s a term people throw out when they feel the government is infringing on their right to do something stupid. Frankly, if people could be trusted to police themselves, we wouldn’t have any laws at all.

Last week, fellow editor Jason Lomberg, published a [piece](#) [1] about his dislike for a court ruling wherein a driver was found guilty of distracted driving after checking his iPhone for a map. I, on the other hand, say more power to the California court.

It may not be a perfect solution, but making laws against these types of infractions is legitimate. If you consider the alternative, which I assume is doing nothing, is it worth the risk? I feel much safer knowing the guy next to me isn’t staring at his lap or looking at a map, at least in theory. A law that could be doing a little bit of good, saving just one life, is worth a little bit of inconvenience. Plus, the amount of technology on the road is going to increase and hopefully we will find a way to make them as safe as possible, but it's a dangerous area.



In fact, drivers using handheld devices are four times more likely to “get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves,” according to a study by [Monash University](#) [2].

For clarification, the law in California says you can’t HOLD your phone while you look at the map. So, buy a holder for your car that allows you to place it on the dashboard or windshield. The marriage of technology and automotives is going to be a tough one, so being as smart as possible is important.

It’s not as if these laws are unique. Ten states ban handheld phones while driving, and 39 states ban texting while driving, according to the [Governors Highway Safety Association](#) [3].

A separate, but clearly related issue, would be laws that restrict handheld phones while driving. This is an example of the government being unable to completely eliminate drivers from talking on the phone but being in a position to at least limit the way in which it’s done. The message is clear: Don’t touch your phone while

Why the government should ban cellphones while driving

Published on Electronic Component News (<http://www.ecnmag.com>)

you're driving.

Nearly all new cell phones are Bluetooth-capable, and most new cars allow you to connect the phone directly to your car. If you don't have a new car, you can still purchase a handsfree or bluetooth device. My phone came with earbuds with a self-contained microphone, which I use whenever I talk on the phone in the car. This is not a difficult law to obey. Statistically, you're much safer just skipping the call altogether anyway.

For the record, stating there are other distractions in the car like eating, texting, talking to other passengers, or a myriad of other things—some of which are already illegal under distracted driving laws—doesn't actually make arguments against the law any stronger. In 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes involving distracted drivers (up from 3, 267 in 2010, according to [Distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov), the official government website for distracted driving). You'll have to excuse the rest of us for wanting safer roads to drive on.

You may "feel safe" glancing at a phone for directions or digging around for your phone to make a quick call, but you're not. You are putting everyone on the road at risk. Either pull over or wait if you can't do it safely. Nothing is that important, and it could save a life.

Source URL (retrieved on 04/20/2015 - 10:35pm):

<http://www.ecnmag.com/blogs/2013/04/why-government-should-ban-cellphones-while-driving>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.ecnmag.com/blogs/2013/04/nanny-state-should-loosen-its-grip-cell-phones>
- [2] <http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/facts-and-statistics.html>
- [3] http://www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html