

Wisconsin Association for Justice: WAJ applauds legislators for introducing bill to combat distracted driving

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Madison, Wisconsin - The Wisconsin Association for Justice applauds Representatives Ron Tusler (R-Appleton), Shannon Zimmerman (R-River Falls), and Dana Wachs (D-Eau Claire); as well as Senator Van Wanggaard (R-Racine) for introducing legislation aimed at combating distracted driving by smartphone or other electronic media use.

Today, the legislators [held a Press Conference](#) in the Assembly Parlor to introduce and build support for a bill which would make needed improvements to Wisconsin's distracted driving laws. WAJ President, Milwaukee Attorney Benjamin S. Wagner, spoke in favor of the bill.

Wagner said, "I applaud this bipartisan group of legislators led by Rep. Ron Tusler and Sen. Van Wanggaard for offering a clear message that we must do everything we can to crack down on people using their smartphones when they should have their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road."

[Wisconsin's original text messaging ban](#) needs an update. The original bill commanded overwhelming, bipartisan support, passing the [Assembly 89-6 and the Senate 30-3](#) when it was enacted in 2009. WAJ shares the legislators' optimism that this bill can *and should* draw bipartisan support this session.

The legislation does three major things which should make Wisconsin drivers think twice before texting and driving. First, it updates Wisconsin law to reflect the capability of modern smart phones by outlawing the use of the phone to, among

other things, access the internet and phone-based applications while driving. Second, it increases the minimum financial penalty for a violation from a mere \$20 to \$100. Lastly, it makes it clear that a person who violates this law and causes the death of another may face prosecution for negligent homicide by the use of a motor vehicle under Wis. Stat. § 940.10.

“As an attorney who represents car crash victims, I see the harm that distracted driving causes every day. Not a day goes by where I am not shocked to see a fellow driver’s attention focused on their smartphone rather than the road ahead,” said Benjamin S. Wagner, President of the Wisconsin Association for Justice, “Too often, this type of distraction leads to tragedy.”

Wagner concluded, “We are grateful for the privilege of sharing the stage with this bipartisan group as they begin building support for this bill. This is just the first step towards safer roads and highways for everybody in Wisconsin.”

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