

FIRST REGULAR SESSION

HOUSE BILL NO. 337

96TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES WELLS (Sponsor), SCHAD, DUGGER, WRIGHT, DENISON,
STREAM, POLLOCK, FUNDERBURK, NETH, SCHARNHORST,
NANCE AND FITZWATER (Co-sponsors).

0107L.011

D. ADAM CRUMBLISS, Chief Clerk

AN ACT

To repeal section 304.820, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to text messaging while operating motor vehicles.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:

Section A. Section 304.820, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 304.820, to read as follows:

304.820. 1. Except as otherwise provided in this section, no person [twenty-one years of age or younger] operating a moving motor vehicle upon the highways of this state shall, by means of a hand-held electronic wireless communications device, send, read, or write a text message or electronic message, **unless the device is equipped with technology allowing for voice-recognition hands-free texting and is being used in such manner.**

2. The provisions of subsection 1 of this section shall not apply to a person operating:

(1) An authorized emergency vehicle; or

(2) A moving motor vehicle while using a hand-held electronic wireless communications device to:

(a) Report illegal activity;

(b) Summon medical or other emergency help;

(c) Prevent injury to a person or property; or

(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.

EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets [thus] in the above bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted from the law. Matter in **bold-face** type in the above bill is proposed language.

15 3. Nothing in this section shall be construed or interpreted as prohibiting a person from
16 making or taking part in a telephone call, by means of a hand-held electronic wireless
17 communications device, while operating a motor vehicle upon the highways of this state.

18 4. As used in this section, "electronic message" means a self-contained piece of digital
19 communication that is designed or intended to be transmitted between hand-held electronic
20 wireless communication devices. "Electronic message" includes, but is not limited to, electronic
21 mail, a text message, an instant message, or a command or request to access an internet site.

22 5. As used in this section, "hand-held electronic wireless communications device"
23 includes any hand-held cellular phone, palm pilot, blackberry, or other mobile electronic device
24 used to communicate verbally or by text or electronic messaging, but shall not apply to any
25 device that is permanently embedded into the architecture and design of the motor vehicle.

26 6. As used in this section, "making or taking part in a telephone call" means listening to
27 or engaging in verbal communication through a hand-held electronic wireless communication
28 device.

29 7. As used in this section, "send, read, or write a text message or electronic message"
30 means using a hand-held electronic wireless telecommunications device to manually
31 communicate with any person by using an electronic message. Sending, reading, or writing a
32 text message or electronic message does not include reading, selecting, or entering a phone
33 number or name into a hand-held electronic wireless communications device for the purpose of
34 making a telephone call.

35 8. A violation of this section shall be deemed an infraction and shall be deemed a
36 moving violation for purposes of point assessment under section 302.302, RSMo.

37 9. The state preempts the field of regulating the use of hand-held electronic wireless
38 communications devices in motor vehicles, and the provisions of this section shall supercede any
39 local laws, ordinances, orders, rules, or regulations enacted by a county, municipality, or other
40 political subdivision to regulate the use of hand-held electronic wireless communication devices
41 by the operator of a motor vehicle.

42 10. The provisions of this section shall not apply to:

43 (1) The operator of a vehicle that is lawfully parked or stopped;

44 (2) Any of the following while in the performance of their official duties: a law
45 enforcement officer; a member of a fire department; or the operator of a public or private
46 ambulance;

47 (3) The use of factory-installed or aftermarket global positioning systems (GPS) or
48 wireless communications devices used to transmit or receive data as part of a digital dispatch
49 system;

50 (4) The use of voice-operated technology;

51 (5) The use of two-way radio transmitters or receivers by a licensee of the Federal
52 Communications Commission in the Amateur Radio Service.

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