



NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Deal signs House Bill 673 into law

Drivers will no longer be allowed to hold or support a phone with their body starting July 1

(Statesboro) - Governor Nathan Deal made Georgia the 16th state in the nation to enact a law banning drivers from having a cellphone in their hand when he signed House Bill 673 Wednesday afternoon in Statesboro.

When the law takes effect on July 1 of this year, drivers will no longer be allowed to have a phone in their hand or supported by any part of their body.

“It’s second nature to pick up our phones when we are behind the wheel but if you have it in your hand when driving after July 1, you run the risk of getting a ticket,” Harris Blackwood, Director of the Governor’s Office of Highway said. “While we encourage everyone to stay off their phones, we recommend drivers to implement now whatever they will need in order to place and receive calls without having the phone in their hands or on their bodies.”

Authored by Representative John Carson (R-Marietta) and passed during the 2018 Georgia General Assembly Session, drivers will have to have an earpiece, wireless headsets or smartphone watch in order to make and receive calls and to use navigational devices.

Texting, sending and receiving e-mails, posting on social media, and browsing the internet are all prohibited, but drivers can text if they are using technology that converts voice to text messages.

Watching and recording videos are not allowed except for videos that are used for navigational purposes and continuously running dash cams.

It is also illegal for drivers to have a phone in their hand when they are stopped for a traffic signal or stop sign. It is legal to make a hand-held phone call or send a text, e-mail or social media post when the vehicle is lawfully parked.

Drivers are allowed to have a phone in their hand to make emergency calls to report a traffic crash, criminal activity, fire, medical emergency or hazardous road conditions.

Law enforcement officers, fire and EMS personnel and employees, and contractors of utility companies are exempt

under the law providing the call is related to their official duties or while responding to a utility emergency.

While most state and local law enforcement officers will be working to educate all motorists on HB 673 in the first few months, drivers should not expect to automatically receive a warning if they are stopped for violating the Hands-Free law.

After July 1, law enforcement officers can and will issue citations in crashes caused by distracted driving and to drivers they feel should be issued a citation for the violation the officer observed.

“Our law enforcement community is ready to work with all drivers to help them understand and abide by the new “Hands-Free” law,” Blackwood said. “Putting our phones down when we are behind the wheel will make our roads safer for everyone to drive, walk and bike because it means we all be more attentive when we behind the steering wheel.”

People wanting more information about House Bill 673 can find it by logging on to www.headsupgeorgia.com or submitting a question to info@gohs.ga.gov.

Media outlets can find a link to video and audio from the HB 673 signing in Statesboro at the following link: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/21wm07dg9iy8ql0/HB%20673%20signing.mpg?dl=0>

Governor Deal: "Here at the home of Georgia Southern, I think is an appropriate place to sign this legislation. The five young women, who you see pictures of before here you today, their lives were lost some three years ago. They were all nursing students. They were headed to a career that would save lives and aid the suffering of many people as a result of what they intended to devote their lives to. It is indeed a great tragedy. But it reminds us what can happen in an instant. A life, a life full of potential and the joy it brought to their families is suddenly taken away. I am honored to sign this Hands-Free legislation here in this community, the home of Georgia Southern. It's aim is to decrease distracted driving by prohibiting the use of wireless telecommunication devices while on any public roads on our state. Even more so, it's aim is to prevent the tyeeps of tragic and avoidable deaths that occured on that stretch of I-16 on that horrible day in April of 2015."

Rep Carson "I think so many people saw a need for this issue. I spoke to a number of the victims' families and we could have done this bill signing in Atlanta. But after talking to the victims of the Georgia Southern nursing students crash and there has been other crashes unfortunately before and since. As much as this issue is a statewide issue. As much as this issue has affects everyone's public safety. I will tell you it is a terrible issue in Atlanta traffic. It is my understanding that this issue and these crashes have devastated the Statesboro community and devastated the Georgia Southern community. I am very happy to be here today. It is the end of an 18 month road. Governor Deal thank you for your leadership on this."

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