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## Hawaii Legislation Proposes Statewide Ban on Texting While Driving

By Rep. Barbara Marumoto, R-Kahala, 1/13/2009 10:53:56 AM

Hawaii drivers will have to keep their hands and thumbs on the wheel, and their eyes on the road if a no-texting/ gaming/E-mailing while driving when, and if, my proposed bill is enacted.

Currently seven states, Alaska, California, Connecticut, Louisiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, Washington and the District of Columbia have a text-messaging ban, which includes any manual communication while operating a motor vehicle. That means no sending or reading text messages, IMs, or E-mail while driving.

Similar bills are now in the works in Delaware, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. The next step should include bans on playing video games while driving before there's a major accident on our highways. An estimated 20 percent of drivers are typing or reading text messages while behind the wheel, according to a February 2008 Nationwide Insurance study on texting while driving.

The state Department of Transportation reported that in Hawaii there been numerous accidents and fatalities because of texting. As lawmakers we must prohibit dangerous driving habits. The City Council and the Senate are taking up similar issues in their respective chambers since this is a matter of public safety, and we will likely see other safety measures in the House. I have been talking about traffic safety for years and these ideas are finally taking root. This bill is part of my Omnibus Traffic Safety measure that encompasses several traffic reforms. Also included are provisions to:

- Prohibit minors from riding on ATVs
- Prohibit passengers riding in pickup truck beds
- Require helmet use for all two wheeled vehicles
- Require video screens be placed behind the driver
- Prohibit cell phone & electronic communication device use except with hands-free accessories
- Prohibit text messaging, gaming & e –mailing while driving.

These provisions will also be introduced as separate bills. I hope that the public will get behind these safety measures. I also hope other legislators will see the wisdom of these ideas and advance similar bills. *Reach Rep. Marumoto, R-Kahala/Kaimuki, at <mailto:repmarumoto@capitol.hawaii.gov>*

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