



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Charles J. Fuschillo Jr.

Senator Fuschillo Votes to Strengthen State's Texting While Driving Ban

CHARLES J. FUSCHILLO JR. May 5, 2011

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Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick) recently voted in favor of legislation to strengthen the state's texting-while-driving ban.

The legislation (S998B), which was approved by the State Senate, would give police officers greater ability to enforce the state's texting-while-driving ban by making it a primary offense. Under the current law, texting-while-driving is only a secondary violation, meaning a driver can only be cited for texting-while-driving if another violation, such as speeding, is also being cited.

"Texting-while-driving is a dangerous distraction that greatly increases the chances of car crashes, which is why it is illegal in New York State. Making it easier for police officers to enforce the state's texting while driving ban would help keep all of us safe when we're on the road," said Senator Fuschillo, Chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee.

The huge increase in text messaging as a form of communication, particularly among young people, has led to a new form of distracted driving which is being blamed for tragedies throughout New York State and the nation. According to a study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, a driver is 23 times more likely to be involved in an accident while text messaging. According to the American Automobile Association (AAA), any activity that takes a driver's attention off the road for more than two seconds can double the risk of a crash. Some research has shown that distracted drivers are more impaired than those who are drunk or under the influence of drugs.

"The secondary nature of the current New York State law dilutes its deterrence value. This bill would stiffen the consequences for those who endanger the rest of us with their careless conduct. There is overwhelming public consensus on the unique threat of text-messaging while driving, and state legislators need to enact a tougher law," said John Corlett, Chair of the AAA Legislative Committee.

The legislation has been sent to the Assembly for consideration.

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