Hand-Free Law in Georgia

Presentation to NCSL Legislative Summit – Distracted Driving

August 5th, 2019
Overview

- Georgia recently led the U.S. in auto insurance premium rates increases (12.2% average in 2016 vs. 5.6% nationwide).

- Georgia’s traffic crashes were up 36% from 2014 to 2016. Fatalities are up 34% over the same period.

- Our population increased only 2% over these years.
Overview

- Increases in crashes are primarily among rear-end collisions, single car crashes, and crashes by 15 to 25-year-old drivers.

- Increase in fatalities are most notable among most vulnerable on the road: pedestrians, motorcyclists, and bicyclists.

- Public safety personnel state this is clearly indicative of driver inattention.
Overview

• Public safety personnel have clearly stated that our “no-texting” laws are unenforceable.

• Traffic officers cannot determine whether a driver is texting or just simply dialing.

• In addition, there were more Georgia traffic fatalities per VMT in 2016 than before the 2010 texting law.
Polling on a Georgia Hands-Free Law

- Republicans overwhelmingly support a new hands-free law by a 72-9% margin.

- Support is also overwhelming among Democrats: fully 65% say they would support a new hands-free law, with just 12% saying they don’t support it.

- Overall, two-thirds of Georgia voters say they support a hands-free law, a 6-1 margin.
### Effectiveness of Hands-Free Laws

#### Reduction in Fatalities per 100 MVMT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Approximate year of law’s passage</th>
<th>Fatality Increase/(decrease) %:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>From year before passage to 2 years after</td>
<td>Total since before law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>-31.1%</td>
<td>-22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>-1.1%</td>
<td>-9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>-3.1%</td>
<td>-0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaii</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-45.5%</td>
<td>-65.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-26.6%</td>
<td>-26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nevada</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>-13.1%</td>
<td>-10.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>-6.9%</td>
<td>-0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>-21.6%</td>
<td>-26.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>-12.1%</td>
<td>-12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>-1.8%</td>
<td>-22.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vermont</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>-19.6%</td>
<td>-19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>-22.3%</td>
<td>-15.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average**

|   | -16.0% | -17.8% |

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- Fifteen states plus D.C. have enacted “hands-free” laws
- Thirteen of these states saw an average **16% decrease** in traffic fatalities within two years after passing and enforcing their new laws.

*Highlighted results indicate a more than 20% statistical decrease in fatalities over the period.*

**Source:** NHTSA
What Georgia Did

- Enacted a “Hands-Free” law (Georgia House Bill 673). A driver cannot:
  1. Hold or support a wireless telecom device
  2. Watch a video or motion on a screen
  3. Record, broadcast or stream a video
  4. Maintains the ban on texting and Internet data

- Staggered monetary fines
- Staggered points against driver’s license
How Georgia Did It

- Formed a Legislative Study Committee and held public meetings around the state
- Engaged various groups: state & local public safety, insurance advocates, healthcare professionals, driving schools, transportation officials, cyclists, etc.
- Show the data
- Share the victims’ families stories
How You Can Do It In Your State

• Get input from around the states (public sentiment is crucial)
• Show the data
• Victims’ families stories are also crucial
• Remember:
  1. The public overwhelmingly supports these laws, even though elected officials might be hesitant
  2. These laws literally save lives