

Texting Ban Passes Committee

Under separate bills that passed out of committee, texting while driving a motor vehicle would be illegal and young drivers in the graduated driver's license program would only be able to have one unrelated person in the vehicle.

These bills were done in response to studies showing the increased likelihood of accidents when persons are texting, and the likelihood of accidents among young drivers due to inexperience and distractions in the vehicle.

Texting Ban

Violators of the texting ban will be fined \$30, but the fines will not begin to be issued until July 1, 2011. For a one-year period, beginning this July, only warnings will be issued.

HF 2021, as amended by the House Transportation Committee, does exempt the use of global positioning systems, navigational systems, and using cell phones to make phone calls.

A person who is texting and gets into an accident that results in serious injury will be fined \$500 and could lose their license for up to 90 days. If the accident results in death, the person is fined \$1,000 and could lose their license for up to 180 days.

Graduated Driver's License

Beginning drivers go through Iowa's graduated driver's license program before they turn 18 and are eligible to receive an unrestricted license. This program begins with the instruction permit.

The House bill, House Study Bill 616, increases the amount of time that a person must have the instruction permit from six months to 12 months. This allows the permit drivers to obtain more driving experience before moving on to the intermediate license.

Under the bill, drivers with an intermediate license would be restricted to one unrelated minor passenger, instead of just limiting the passengers to the number of seat belts in the vehicle. Siblings and children living in the same household would not fall under this restriction. This passenger restriction would also apply to kids holding a school license. This license allows them to drive to and from school.

Intermediate license holders would not be allowed to drive between the hours of 11pm and 5am unless they have a signed waiver stating that they are traveling to or from work or a school related activity. Under current law, this restriction applies between 12:30am and 5am.

Both bills are ready for debate by the full House.