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Gov. Whitmer Signs Legislation to Protect Michiganders on the Road

LANSING, Mich – Today, Governor Gretchen Whitmer joined state officials and anti-distracted driving leaders to sign three bills aimed at reducing distracted driving and saving lives by ensuring that drivers have their full attention on the road with the use of hands-free technology.

“I’m proud to sign today’s legislation to reduce distracted driving in Michigan. Too many Michiganders have lost loved ones to distracted driving, and everyone should be safe on their way to school, home, or work,” said **Governor Whitmer**. “We developed our last Strategic Highway Safety Plan in 2019 and already we have seen a reduction in the number of fatalities caused by distracted driving. These bills are another step toward reducing that number even further. Our goal is to see zero traffic deaths by 2050 and I know that by working together we can get it done.”

“We are working to ensure Michigan roads are safe for everyone. This important new law updates the rules of the road to reflect today’s reality and to protect drivers and passengers, cyclists and pedestrians,” said **Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson**. “I’m grateful to Governor Whitmer and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle for taking this important step to reduce distracted driving and save lives on Michigan’s roads.”

The Governor’s Traffic Safety Advisory Commission (GTSAC) was formed by an executive order in 2002 to identify traffic safety challenges and champion strategies to address them. The GTSAC develops regular Strategic Highway Safety Plans to eliminate fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways. The Commission developed the last plan in 2019 with a focus on distracted driving and by working together, Michigan’s traffic safety partners have been able to reduce distracted driver fatalities by six percent and reduce fatalities involving drivers under 21 by eight percent.

Governor Whitmer signed House Bills 4250, 4251, and 4252 which were sponsored by state Representatives Matt Koleszar, Tyrone Carter, and Mike Mueller. In the Senate, state Senator Paul Wojno sponsored companion Senate Bills 239 and 240 and state Senator Kevin Hertel sponsored Senate Bill 241.

[House Bill 4250](#) updates Michigan's distracted driving laws, which currently includes texting and driving, to also include watching or recording videos and engaging in social media, among other usages. The new law would allow drivers to take advantage of new voice-operated or hands-free technology if they need

to use cell phone functions. The bill also allows a court to order drivers to complete a basic driver improvement course if they are found responsible for three or more civil infractions within a three-year period and updates fines for infractions.

“Passing this bi-partisan legislation will have a positive impact on helping make our roadways safer for all users by reducing distractions while driving,” said **state Senator Paul Wojno (D-Warren)**. “Staying focused and not driving while distracted will help reduce accidents and save lives.”

"Dangerous incidents tied to distracted driving have continued to increase and it is clear that our state's motor vehicle laws are in desperate need of modernization. The signing of these bills into law marks the end of five years' worth of bipartisan work," said House Bill 4250 sponsor **state Representative Matt Koleszar (D-Plymouth)**. "This legislation is designed to make our roads safer for every driver and passenger in Michigan and provide law enforcement with the tools they need to crack down on this dangerous behavior."

[House Bill 4251](#) provides accountability for drivers who put themselves and others in danger by making related changes regarding commercial vehicles, driving record points, and driver improvement courses.

“Too many of us have seen first-hand the harmful consequences and damage caused because people were not fully paying attention to the road while behind the wheel,” said House Bill 4251 sponsor **state Representative Tyrone Carter (D-Detroit)**. “Current Michigan law doesn't go far enough to protect drivers on the road, and this legislation is changing that. Simply banning texting is not enough with evolving technology and the convenience of smartphones. I'm grateful to have been a part of ensuring these bills made it to the Governor today. In order to increase public safety, we must ensure that people remain alert and focused while they are behind the wheel.”

[House Bill 4252](#) requires the Michigan State Police (MSP) to submit a progress report on the effectiveness of the new law 3.5 years after it takes effect. After introducing a hands-free law in April, Ohio has seen a nine percent drop in distracted driving in just one month, preventing over 500 crashes.

"Too many Michiganders have been injured or lost their lives because of a distracted driver," said **state Senator Kevin Hertel (D-St.Clair Shores)**. "As a father and a regular commuter, I am grateful to see this legislation pass and ready to get to work on educating our public that keeping eyes on the road- and off our phones-helps make everyone's travel safer."

“This legislation is about changing the culture for our young drivers and saving lives,” said House Bill 4252 sponsor **state Representative Mike Mueller (R-Linden)**. With progressing technology, the new law will reinforce good driving practices, which will ultimately lead to safer roads for all drivers. Other states that have enacted these policies have seen proven drops in vehicle collision fatalities.”

Statements from officials and community leaders

“I am so pleased and honored to be with Governor Whitmer and other victims' families today, as these life-saving bills are signed into law. It is especially moving for me and my family to have these bills signed at the Mitchel Kiefer Memorial Ice Rink, where Mitchel played his last hockey game with Detroit Catholic Central,” said **Steve Kiefer, Founder and Chairman, Kiefer Foundation**. “With this legislation, Michigan becomes the 26th "Hands Free" state in the nation, making it illegal to hold an electronic device while driving, and The Kiefer Foundation will not stop until all 50 states have similar legislation in

place. Based on the results in other states, we know that these laws will save lives in Michigan this summer – I am certain that Mitchel is with us today, smiling, as we change the world in his honor.”

“As someone who spent much of my career in construction and overseeing the design of roads, this especially resonates with me,” said **Brad Wieferrich, director of the Michigan Department of Transportation**. “Everything we do is informed by the imperative to build and maintain a safe system for the traveling public. Reducing distractions for drivers will provide further protections to motorists and the people working on our roads.”

“As manufacturers and automakers, we take our roles extremely seriously when it comes to answering the challenges that arise when we combine busy people and new tech. And today, as always, our roles are to be the problem solvers, the engineers and the innovators that put our expertise to work to invent a set of new solutions – And to adapt our business model to ensure that what might be cutting-edge today can be implemented tomorrow across the board, as a standard feature on all future vehicles, accessible to everyone who drives any of our cars off the lot,” said **Lisa Lunsford, Chair of MICHauto and CEO & Co-Founder of Global Strategic Supply Solutions**. “Just as we lead our industry from Michigan in placing better, safer and smarter technology within reach of the driver’s seat, we hope that bills like these will continue to be enacted across the country.”

“The 15,000 members of Operating Engineers 324 are the central to the skilled workforce that carry out the critical work of fixing and repairing roads and bridges of our state,” said **Operating Engineers 324 Business Manager Douglas Stockwell**. “This work often takes place just inches from moving traffic, and too often we have seen the tragedies that occur when motorists choose to look at their phones rather than the road in front of them. We need to do everything in our power to make sure road work can be done safely, and this bill to eliminate distracted driving does just that – makes work zones safer and helps ensure that those working and driving on Michigan roads return home safe at the end of the day.”



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