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SENATE BILL 5487

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State of Washington                      58th Legislature                      2003 Regular Session

By Senators Eide, Swecker, Jacobsen, Kohl-Welles, Franklin and Winsley

Read first time 01/27/2003.      Referred to Committee on Highways & Transportation.

1            AN ACT Relating to the use of a wireless communications device  
2 while operating a motor vehicle; adding a new section to chapter 46.61  
3 RCW; creating a new section; prescribing penalties; and providing an  
4 effective date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 1.**    The use of wireless communications devices  
7 by motorists has increased in recent years.      While wireless  
8 communications devices have assisted with quick reporting of road  
9 emergencies, their use has also contributed to accidents and other  
10 mishaps on Washington state roadways.    When motorists hold a wireless  
11 communications device in one hand and drive with the other, their  
12 chances of becoming involved in a traffic mishap increase.    It is the  
13 legislature's intent to phase out the use of hand-held wireless  
14 communications devices by motorists while operating a vehicle.

15            NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 2.**    A new section is added to chapter 46.61 RCW  
16 to read as follows:

17            (1) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, any

1 person operating a moving motor vehicle while holding a wireless  
2 communications device to his or her ear is guilty of a traffic  
3 infraction.

4 (2) Subsection (1) of this section does not apply to a person  
5 operating:

6 (a) An authorized emergency vehicle;

7 (b) A moving motor vehicle using a wireless communications device  
8 in hands-free mode;

9 (c) A moving motor vehicle who uses a hand-held wireless  
10 communications device to:

11 (i) Report illegal activity;

12 (ii) Summon medical or other emergency help;

13 (iii) Prevent injury to a person or property.

14 (3) For purposes of this section, "hands-free mode" means the use  
15 of a wireless communications device with a speaker phone, headset, or  
16 earpiece.

17 (4) The state preempts the field of regulating the use of wireless  
18 communications devices in motor vehicles, and this section supersedes  
19 any local laws, ordinances, orders, rules, or regulations enacted by a  
20 political subdivision or municipality to regulate the use of wireless  
21 communications devices by the operator of a motor vehicle.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** This act takes effect July 1, 2005.

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