

2021 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 565

BY REPRESENTATIVE HUVAL

Prefiled pursuant to Article III, Section 2(A)(4)(b)(i) of the Constitution of Louisiana.

MTR VEHICLE/VIOLATIONS: Provides relative to the operation of a motor vehicle while using wireless telecommunication devices

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 15:571.11(A)(4) and R.S. 32:300.5 and to repeal R.S. 32:300.6,
3 300.7, and 300.8, relative to the prohibition of the use of certain wireless
4 telecommunications devices while operating a motor vehicle; to provide for the
5 distribution of fines collected for violations; to provide for definitions; to provide for
6 exceptions and penalties relative to the use of certain wireless telecommunications
7 devices while operating a motor vehicle; to provide for enforcement and reporting;
8 and to provide for related matters.

9 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

10 Section 1. R.S. 15:571.11(A)(4) is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

11 §571.11. Dispositions of fines and forfeitures

12 A.

13 * * *

14 (4) Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, twenty-five dollars
15 from all fines collected on a first violation pursuant to R.S. 32:300.5, ~~300.6, 300.7,~~
16 ~~and 300.8~~ shall be distributed to the indigent defender fund of the judicial district in
17 which the citation was issued and fifty dollars from each fine collected on any
18 subsequent violation pursuant to R.S. 32:300.5 shall be distributed to the indigent
19 defender fund of the judicial district in which the citation was issued.

20 * * *

1 Section 2. R.S. 32:300.5 is hereby amended and reenacted to read as follows:

2 ~~§300.5. Use of certain wireless telecommunications devices for text messaging and~~
3 ~~social networking prohibited~~

4 ~~A.(1) Except as provided in Subsection B of this Section, no person shall~~
5 ~~operate any motor vehicle upon any public road or highway of this state while using~~
6 ~~a wireless telecommunications device to write, send, or read a text-based~~
7 ~~communication. For purposes of this Section, a person shall not be deemed to be~~
8 ~~writing, reading, or sending a text message if the person reads, selects, or enters a~~
9 ~~telephone number or name in a wireless telecommunications device for the purpose~~
10 ~~of making a telephone call.~~

11 ~~(2) No person shall operate any motor vehicle upon any public road or~~
12 ~~highway of this state while using a wireless telecommunications device to access,~~
13 ~~read, or post to a social networking site.~~

14 ~~(3)(a) "Wireless telecommunications device" means a cellular telephone, a~~
15 ~~text-messaging device, a personal digital assistant, a stand-alone computer, or any~~
16 ~~other substantially similar wireless device that is readily removable from the vehicle~~
17 ~~and is used to write, send, or read text or data through manual input. A "wireless~~
18 ~~telecommunications device" shall not include any device or component that is~~
19 ~~permanently affixed to a motor vehicle. It does not include citizens band radios,~~
20 ~~citizens band radio hybrids, commercial two-way radio communication devices, two-~~
21 ~~way radio transmitters or receivers used by licensees of the Federal Communication~~
22 ~~Commission in the Amateur Radio Service, or electronic communication devices~~
23 ~~with a push-to-talk function.~~

24 ~~(b) "Write, send, or read a text-based communication" means using a~~
25 ~~wireless telecommunications device to manually communicate with any person by~~
26 ~~using a text-based communication referred to as a text message, instant message, or~~
27 ~~electronic mail.~~

28 ~~(c) "Access, read, or post to a social networking site" means using a wireless~~
29 ~~telecommunications device to access, read, or post on such device to any web-based~~

1 ~~service that allows individuals to construct a profile within a bounded system,~~
2 ~~articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and communicate~~
3 ~~with other members of the site.~~

4 B. ~~The provisions of Paragraph (A)(1) of this Section shall not apply to the~~
5 ~~following:~~

6 ~~(1) Any law enforcement officer, firefighter, or operator of an authorized~~
7 ~~emergency vehicle while engaged in the actual performance of his official duties.~~

8 ~~(2) An operator of a moving motor vehicle using a wireless~~
9 ~~telecommunications device to:~~

10 ~~(a) Report illegal activity.~~

11 ~~(b) Summon medical or other emergency help.~~

12 ~~(c) Prevent injury to a person or property.~~

13 ~~(d) Relay information between a transit or for-hire operator and that~~
14 ~~operator's dispatcher, in which the device is permanently affixed to the~~
15 ~~vehicle.~~

16 ~~(e) Navigate using a global positioning system.~~

17 ~~(3) A physician or other health care provider using a wireless~~
18 ~~telecommunications device to communicate with a hospital, health clinic or the~~
19 ~~office of the physician, or to otherwise provide for the health care of an individual~~
20 ~~or medical emergency through a text-based communication.~~

21 C.(1) ~~The first violation of the provisions of this Section shall be punishable~~
22 ~~by a fine of not more than five hundred dollars.~~

23 ~~(2) Each subsequent violation shall be punishable by a fine of not more than~~
24 ~~one thousand dollars.~~

25 ~~(3) If the person is involved in a crash at the time of violation, then the fine~~
26 ~~shall be equal to double the amount of the standard fine imposed in this Subsection~~
27 ~~and the law enforcement officer investigating the crash shall indicate on the written~~
28 ~~accident form that the person was using a wireless telecommunications device at the~~
29 ~~time of the crash.~~

1 ~~(4) Any violation of this Section shall constitute a moving violation.~~

2 ~~§300-8: Use of wireless telecommunications devices in school zones; prohibited;~~
3 exceptions

4 A. As used in this Section, the following terms shall have the meanings
5 ascribed to them in this Section, unless the context clearly indicates a different
6 meaning:

7 (1) "Access, read, or post to a social networking site" means using a wireless
8 telecommunications device to access, read, or post on such device to any web-based
9 service that allows individuals to construct a profile within a bounded system,
10 articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and communicate
11 with other members of the site.

12 (2) "Engage in a call" means talking or listening during a voice transmission
13 on a wireless telecommunications device or manually entering names or telephone
14 numbers to initiate a voice transmission, except when using a hands-free wireless
15 telephone.

16 (3) "Wireless telecommunications device" means a cellular telephone, a text-
17 messaging device, a personal digital assistant, a stand-alone computer or other
18 electronic device, or any other substantially similar portable wireless device that is
19 readily removable from the vehicle and is used to write, send, or read text or data
20 through manual input or create, edit, or view video or other images. ~~A "wireless~~
21 "Wireless telecommunications device" shall not mean ~~include~~ any device or
22 component ~~that is~~ permanently affixed to a motor vehicle, nor shall it mean any. ~~It~~
23 ~~does not include a hands-free wireless telephone, an electronic communication~~
24 ~~device used hands-free, citizens band radios, citizens band radio hybrids, commercial~~
25 ~~two-way radio communications devices, two-way radio transmitters or receivers used~~
26 ~~by licensees of the Federal Communication~~ Communications Commission in the
27 Amateur Radio Service, or electronic communication devices with a push-to-talk
28 function.

1 (4) "Write, send, or read a text-based communication" means using a
2 ~~wireless telecommunications device to manually communicate with any person by~~
3 ~~using a text-based communication including but not limited to a text message, instant~~
4 ~~message, or electronic mail, or other text-based application to manually~~
5 communicate with any person.

6 B.(1) Except as provided in Subsection C of this Section, no person shall
7 operate any wireless telecommunications device while operating a motor vehicle
8 upon any public road or highway ~~during the posted hours within a school zone on~~
9 ~~such public road or highway.~~

10 (2) Operating a "wireless telecommunications device" shall ~~include~~ mean
11 any of the following:

12 ~~(1)~~(a) Engaging in a call.

13 ~~(2)~~(b) Writing, sending, or reading a text-based communication.

14 ~~(3)~~(c) Accessing, reading, or posting to a social networking site.

15 (d) Accessing, viewing, posting, editing, or creating a video, photograph, or
16 other image.

17 (e) Accessing, reading, viewing, composing, browsing, transmitting, saving
18 or retrieving electronic data from any application or other media.

19 (f) Using any application or feature of a wireless telecommunications device
20 by making manual entries of letters, numbers, symbols, commands, or any
21 combination thereof.

22 (g) Holding or physically supporting a wireless telecommunications device
23 in either or both hands or with any part of the body, except for an earpiece or
24 headphone device or a device worn on the wrist to talk or listen during a voice
25 transmission.

26 C.(1) The provisions of Subsection B of this Section shall not apply to any
27 of the following persons in the performance of their official duties:

28 (a) A law enforcement officer.

29 (b) A firefighter.

1 (c) An operator of an authorized emergency vehicle.

2 ~~€.(2)~~ The provisions of Subsection B of this Section shall not apply to a
3 person who uses a wireless telecommunications device ~~and does~~ while doing any of
4 the following:

5 ~~(1)(a) Reports~~ Reporting a traffic collision, medical emergency, other
6 emergency, or serious road hazard.

7 ~~(2)(b) Reports~~ Reporting a situation in which the person believes a person
8 his personal safety is in jeopardy of serious injury or death.

9 ~~(3) Reports or averts the perpetration or potential perpetration of a criminal~~
10 ~~act against the driver or another person.~~

11 (c) Relaying information between a transit, for-hire operator, or a
12 transportation network company driver, and that operator's dispatcher or affiliated
13 transportation network company, in which the device is affixed to the vehicle.

14 (d) Viewing data or images related to navigation of a motor vehicle using a
15 hands-free global positioning system.

16 ~~(4)(e) Operates~~ Operating a wireless telecommunications device while the
17 motor vehicle is lawfully stationary and not in violation of any other law, lawfully
18 parked.

19 (3) Except as otherwise provided in Subparagraphs (2)(a) through (d) of this
20 Subsection, using the telecommunications device to write, send, or read a text-based
21 communication or using the telecommunication device to access, read, or post to a
22 social media website shall not be permitted while a vehicle is positioned in a travel
23 lane.

24 ~~(5) Uses a wireless telecommunications device in an official capacity as an~~
25 ~~operator of an authorized emergency vehicle.~~

26 D.(1) Any violation of this Section shall constitute a moving violation.

27 (2)(a) The first violation of the provisions of this Section shall be punishable
28 by a fine of not more than ~~five~~ one hundred dollars but not less than fifty dollars and,

1 at the judge's discretion, community service not to exceed fifteen hours, at least half
2 of which shall consist of participation in a litter abatement or collection program.

3 (b) ~~Each subsequent~~ The second violation of the provisions of this Section
4 shall be punishable by a fine of not more than ~~one thousand~~ three hundred dollars
5 and a suspension of driver's license for a ~~sixty-day period~~ but not less than one
6 hundred dollars and, at the judge's discretion, community service not to exceed thirty
7 hours, at least half of which shall consist of participation in a litter abatement or
8 collection program.

9 (c) The third violation of the provisions of this Section shall be punishable
10 by a fine of not more than three hundred dollars but not less than one hundred dollars
11 and shall include the suspension of the person's driver's license for a period of thirty
12 days and, at the judge's discretion, community service not to exceed sixty hours, at
13 least half of which shall consist of participation in a litter abatement or collection
14 program.

15 ~~(c)~~(d) If a person the operator of a motor vehicle is involved in a collision
16 crash at the time of the violation, then the fine shall be equal to double the amount
17 of the standard fine imposed in this Subsection, and the The law enforcement officer
18 investigating the collision crash shall indicate on the written accident report that the
19 person operator of a motor vehicle was using a wireless telecommunications device
20 at the time of the collision crash.

21 (3) ~~Use of a wireless telecommunications device for any purpose provided~~
22 for in Subsection C of this Section shall be an affirmative defense against an alleged
23 to a violation of this Section and for the operator of a motor vehicle person to may
24 produce documentary or other evidence in support of this defense that the wireless
25 telecommunications device that is the basis of the alleged violation was used for
26 emergency purposes as provided in Subsection C of this Section.

27 (4) For any violation occurring before January 1, 2022, the law enforcement
28 officer shall only issue a written warning.

1 E. ~~The provisions of this Section shall only apply within a school zone upon~~
2 ~~a public road or highway during posted hours when signs are located in a visible~~
3 ~~manner in each direction that indicate the use of a hand-held wireless~~
4 ~~communications device is prohibited while operating a motor vehicle.~~

5 (1) When a law enforcement officer issues a citation for a violation of this
6 Section, the law enforcement officer shall record the race and ethnicity of the
7 violation. All law enforcement agencies shall maintain such information and report
8 the information to the Department of Public Safety and Corrections in a form and
9 manner as determined by the department. Beginning August 1, 2022, the
10 Department of Public Safety and Corrections shall annually report the data collected
11 under this Subsection to the governor, the president of the Senate, and the speaker
12 of the House of Representatives. The data collected shall be reported, at a minimum,
13 by statewide totals for local law enforcement agencies, state law enforcement
14 agencies, and state university law enforcement agencies. The statewide total for
15 local law enforcement agencies shall combine the data for the parish sheriffs and the
16 municipal law enforcement agencies.

17 (2) A law enforcement officer who stops a motor vehicle for a violation of
18 this Section shall inform the motor vehicle operator of his right to decline a search
19 of his wireless communications device and shall not do any of the following:

20 (a) Access the wireless communications device without a warrant.

21 (b) Confiscate the wireless communications device while awaiting the
22 issuance of a warrant to access such device.

23 (c) Obtain consent from the motor vehicle operator to search his wireless
24 communications device through coercion or other improper method. Consent to
25 search a motor vehicle operator's wireless communications device must be voluntary
26 and unequivocal.

27 (d) Make a custodial arrest except upon a warrant issued for failure to appear
28 for a felony or state misdemeanor charge in court when summoned.

29 Section 3. R.S. 32:300.6, 300.7, and 300.8 are hereby repealed in their entirety.

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 565 Engrossed

2021 Regular Session

Huval

Abstract: Prohibits the use of a wireless telecommunications device while operating a motor vehicle, provides for exceptions and penalties for such use, and provides for enforcement and reporting of such violations.

Present law requires \$25 from all fines collected pursuant to present law to be distributed to the indigent defender fund of the judicial district in which the citation was issued.

Proposed law modifies present law by removing repealed citations under proposed law and expands present law to require \$50 from each fine collected on subsequent violations of proposed law to be distributed to the indigent defender fund of the judicial district in which the citation was issued.

Present law prohibits the use of wireless telecommunications devices in school zones.

Proposed law extends the prohibition to include general usage of wireless telecommunications devices while driving.

Present law defines the term "engage in a call" as talking or listening on a wireless telecommunications device.

Proposed law modifies present law by defining the term "engage in a call" as talking or listening during a voice transmission on a wireless telecommunications device or manually entering names or phone numbers to initiate a call, except when using a hands-free wireless device.

Present law specifies that a "wireless telecommunications device" does not include any device or component that is permanently affixed to a motor vehicle, a hands-free wireless telephone, an electronic communication device used hands-free, citizen band radios, citizen band radio hybrids, commercial two-way radio communication devices, two-radio transmitters or receivers used by licensees of the Federal Communication Commission in the Amateur Radio Service, or electronic communication devices with push-to-talk functions.

Proposed law modifies present law by adding that a "wireless telecommunications device" also does not include any other electronic device or any other substantially similar portable wireless device used to create, edit, or view video or other images. Proposed law modifies present law by removing a hands-free wireless telephone from the exclusion.

Present law defines the term "write, send, or read a text-based communication" as using a wireless telecommunications device to manually communicate with any person by text-based communication including but not limited to a text message, instant message, or electronic mail.

Proposed law modifies present law by defining the term "write, send, or read a text-based communication" to include other text-based applications used to manually communicate with any person and removes the use of a wireless telecommunications device to manually communicate with any person by text-based communication.

Present law specifies that operating a wireless telecommunications device includes engaging in a call; writing, sending, or reading a text-based communication; and accessing, reading, or posting to a social networking site.

Proposed law adds to present law accessing, viewing, posting, editing, or creating a video, photograph, or other image; accessing, reading, viewing, composing, browsing, transmitting, saving, or retrieving electronic data from any application or other media; using any application or feature of such a device by making manual entries of letters, numbers, symbols, or any combination thereof; and holding or physically supporting a wireless telecommunications device in either or both hands or with any part of the body, except for an earpiece, headphone device, or a wrist device to talk or listen during a voice transmission.

Proposed law provides exceptions for operating a wireless telecommunications device while operating a motor vehicle upon any public road or highway for law enforcement officers, firefighters, and operators of authorized emergency vehicles.

Present law provides exceptions for operating a wireless telecommunications device while operating a motor vehicle upon any public road or highway for a person who uses a wireless telecommunications device: to report a traffic collision, medical emergency, or serious road hazard; to report a situation in which the person believes his personal safety is in jeopardy; to report or avert the perpetration or potential perpetration of a criminal act against the driver or another person; or while the motor vehicle is parked.

Proposed law modifies the exception in present law by specifying that it applies to a person using a wireless telecommunications device: to report other emergencies; to report a situation in which the person believes that an individual is in jeopardy of serious injury or death; to relay information between a transit or for-hire operator, including a transportation network company driver, and that operator's dispatcher, in which the device is affixed to the vehicle; to view data or images to navigate using a hands-free global positioning system; and to operate a device for a purpose other than texting or accessing social media while the motor vehicle is lawfully stationary and not in violation of any other law. Proposed law removes the exceptions for a person using a wireless telecommunications device to: report a situation in which the person believes their personal safety is in jeopardy or to report or avert the perpetration or potential perpetration of a criminal act against the driver or another person.

Present law requires the first violation be punishable by a fine of not more than \$500.

Proposed law modifies present law by reducing the fine for a first violation from \$500 to a fine of \$100 but not less than \$50 and authorizes a judge to order community service not to exceed 15 hours, at least half of which must consist of participation in a litter abatement or collection program.

Present law requires each subsequent violation be punishable by a fine of not more than \$1000 and a 60-day driver's license suspension.

Proposed law modifies present law to provide that a second violation is punishable by a fine of \$300 but not less than \$100 and authorizes a judge to order community service not to exceed 30 hours, at least half of which must consist of participation in a litter abatement or collection program. Proposed law requires the third violation be punishable by a fine of not more than \$300 but not less than \$100 and to include a 30-day driver's license suspension and authorizes a judge to order community service not to exceed 60 hours, at least half of which must consist of participation in a litter abatement or collection program.

Present law requires a person involved in a collision at the time of the violation to be fined double the amount of the standard fine imposed. Present law requires the law enforcement officer investigating the collision to indicate on a written report that the person was using a wireless telecommunications device at the time of the collision.

Proposed law modifies the double fine imposed in present law to be designated for the operator of a motor vehicle involved in a crash at the time of the violation.

Proposed law requires law enforcement officers to issue a written warning for any violation occurring before Jan. 1, 2022.

Present law establishes an affirmative defense against an alleged violation of present law by allowing the person to produce documentary or other evidence that the wireless telecommunications device that is the basis of the alleged violation was used for emergency purposes as provided for in present law. Proposed law modifies present law to only allow enumerated exceptions (first responders, concerned citizens, navigation, and stationary).

Proposed law requires law enforcement officers issuing citations under present and proposed law to record the race and ethnicity of the violator to be reported by the law enforcement agency to the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections (DPSC). Proposed law requires DPSC, beginning Aug. 1, 2022, to annually report the collected data to the governor, president of the Senate, and speaker of the House of Representatives. Proposed law requires the data collected to be reported, at a minimum, by statewide totals for local, state, and university law enforcement agencies, and requires the statewide total for local law enforcement agencies to combine the data collected by sheriffs and municipal police officers.

Proposed law requires a law enforcement officer who stops a motor vehicle for a violation to inform the operator of the vehicle of his right to decline a search of his wireless communications device. Proposed law prohibits the law enforcement officer during a stop from accessing the device without a warrant; confiscating the device while waiting on the warrant to access; obtaining consent from the operator of the vehicle through coercion or other improper methods; or making a custodial arrest except in situations where a warrant was issued for failure to appear for a felony or state misdemeanor charge in court when summoned.

Present law specifies that the provisions of present law only apply within a school zone upon a public road or highway during posted hours when signs are located in a visible manner in each direction that indicate the use of a hand-held wireless communications device is prohibited while operating a motor vehicle.

Proposed law repeals present law and makes prohibitions applicable to intrastate travel subject to enumerated exceptions.

(Amends R.S. 15:571.11(A)(4) and R.S. 32:300.5; Repeals R.S. 32:300.6, 300.7, and 300.8)