



Wisconsin Legislature

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Cell Phone Ban on School Buses Passes Assembly Committee

MADISON – By a unanimous vote, Senate Bill 91 passed the Assembly Committee on Transportation on Thursday. This bill, introduced by Senator Tim Carpenter and Representative Samantha Kerkman, would ban the use of cellular phones and other wireless devices on school buses except during emergencies. “Too often the use of cell phones while driving results in tragic accidents,” said Representative Kerkman. “These accidents become even more tragic when several young children are involved either on their way to school or on the way home.” Senator Carpenter said, “When parents put their children onto a school bus, they are entrusting the driver to take the children safely to their destination and back home again. It is not possible for a school bus driver to drive defensively and be prepared for every possible emergency while using a cell phone. We need to make sure school bus drivers are focusing on their jobs 100 percent of the time.”

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), school bus drivers must stay alert at all times and be prepared for every emergency that could arise. Failure to adhere to these basic guidelines increases the risk to the safety of passengers. Data collected by the NHTSA confirms the leading cause of traffic accidents is driver inattention. Given the findings of NHTSA, Representative Kerkman said, “I understand that most responsible school bus drivers would never consider using a wireless device while transporting kids to and from school, but the temptation to answer an incoming call is still there. This is common-sense legislation to ensure our kids are safe at all times while riding in a school bus.”

Senate Bill 91 will now be referred to the Assembly Committee on Rules where it will be considered for inclusion into the floor agenda during the fall session, scheduled to begin on September 16th. The bill passed the Senate by a voice vote on April 28th, before it was messaged to the Assembly and referred to the Transportation Committee for consideration. Once passed by the Assembly, the bill will be sent to Governor Jim Doyle for his approval.

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