



Safe Roads  
ALLIANCE

**STOP**DISTRACTIONS.ORG

MEDIA ALERT

**Massachusetts Legislature Fails to Pass Hands Free**

**During 11<sup>th</sup> Hour LOBBY Hands Free Fails**

***Lawmakers Break for Recess without Agreeing on Compromise for Hands-Free Language to End Deadly Driving Epidemic***

***Statements from TextLess Live More, Safe Roads Alliance and Stop Distractions.org***

**STATEMENT FROM TEXTLESS LIVE MORE**

“Late last night, the Massachusetts legislature failed to agree on compromise language to pass a Hands Free Law, despite near landslide majority votes in both the House and the Senate earlier this year. Today, they take a recess during Summer’s 100 Deadliest Days, the period between Memorial Day and Labor Day when the number of crash fatalities involving teen drivers historically rise.

While lawmakers enjoy a vacation away from Beacon Hill, Massachusetts highways, roads, streets and sidewalks continue to be unsafe due to drivers holding devices in their hands, looking down and not at the road in front of them.

Today, because there is zero language around data collection, we have no method in place of combating this concern for minority communities.

So today, August 1, we have nothing to help save lives, end distracted driving and combat racial profiling.

Really, Massachusetts?

We will be back when the legislature returns in September to voice our frustration, lobby for compromise, and show our commitment to make Massachusetts Hands Free for the safety and well-being of all who live, walk, ride a bike, drive or drive through the Commonwealth.”

**Rich Levitan,  
President + CEO TextLess Live More**

**STATEMENT FROM SAFE ROADS ALLIANCE**

“We are deeply disappointed with the legislature for failing to pass a hands-free bill last night. This is an issue of public safety in a time when too many drivers are focused on their phones instead of the road.

If the legislature keeps trying to add other attachments to the straight forward hands-free bill, we are continuing to see that year after year, no one wins. There has to be a compromise or we will all lose.

We expect that our legislature will continue to work and talk over recess and that a compromised bill will be sent to the Governor’s desk before the end of September. Twenty states have managed to pass a hands-free bill; Maine, Tennessee, Arizona and Minnesota all in the last 3 months. It’s embarrassing and irresponsible that Massachusetts still has such antiquated traffic safety laws. On the day when Minnesota advocates celebrate their hands-free law going into effect, MA continues to let down their public. Ten years of this fight is long enough. We need a hands-free law now.”

**Emily Stein**  
**President, Safe Roads Alliance**

### **STATEMENT FROM STOPDISTRACTIONS.ORG**

[StopDistractions.org](http://StopDistractions.org) who works with victims’ families across the nation to end the devastating effects of distracted driving tragedies is appalled at the Massachusetts legislature for once again refusing to act on life-saving legislation which has overwhelming public support. For a bill that passed unanimously out of the Senate and had only 2 Nay votes in the House to be once again set aside is showing a complete disregard for the people of Massachusetts lives and safety. (House vote 155-2 & Senate vote of 40-0!)

We, as the families of the victims of these crashes, have paid the ultimate price by losing the ones we love. How many more have to die before you will fulfill your job requirements of protecting the citizens and visitors to your Commonwealth? Twenty other states have passed this law and lives are being saved... when will you?

The excuses being given for years over racial profiling concerns have been addressed in this bill to track this data to help analyze the citations for patterns of profiling so they can be addressed. Additionally, the current texting law is much more conducive to profiling due to its being so subjective and allowing some uses of the phone and not others. The hands-free laws are crafted to help alleviate those concerns as it makes sure the phone is completely out of the drivers hands therefore it is easier to enforce. If the phone is not in your hand, then you are not in violation. Use this bill as a stepping stone to begin to address

any racial profiling concerns in the Commonwealth by building on the amended language to track the citations to make sure they are not being disproportionately issued to people of color on other traffic violations. But don't sacrifice the lives of the ones we love by continuing to delay passing legislation that has overwhelming support and WILL save lives. Especially when the bill sponsors worked intently to try to address these profiling concerns with language in the bill to track the effects in relation to this issue.

**To the Massachusetts legislature:**

While others states race to protect their people from the dangers of distracted driving you have once again wasted precious time which is costing people their lives. The time to act is now before this epidemic impacts your family the way it has countless others. How many more must die? #ItsTime for a #HandsFreeMassachusetts and we will not rest until it is!

**Jennifer Smith**  
CEO, [StopDistractions.org](http://StopDistractions.org)