

Bill would create statewide ban on using cellphone while driving

March 02, 2013 | By Rafael Guerrero, Chicago Tribune reporter
March 02, 2013

chicagotribune.com

State Rep. John D'Amico says the patchwork of cellphone driving can be confusing. (Chris Walker, Chicago Tribune)

SPRINGFIELD — — A new proposal to ban the use of cellphones while driving in Illinois passed the House on Friday along with two other traffic safety measures.

Sponsored by Rep. John D'Amico, D-Chicago, the bill would prohibit hand-held devices from being used by drivers except in emergencies. Drivers would have to use hands-free features or pull to the side of the road to use a cellphone. The bill goes to the Senate, where a similar proposal died last year.

D'Amico said there is a growing realization that Illinois has a patchwork of cellphone driving regulations. The Tribune reported last year that 76 municipalities had enacted cellphone restrictions.

"Right now, everybody is driving town to town, and you don't know where you can and can't pick up the phone — let alone, it's a huge distraction while you're driving the car," D'Amico said. "We want to do everything we can here to try and reduce accidents and fatalities."

But Rep. Mike Bost, R-Murphysboro, likened the proposed ban to an Orwellian "Big Brother" crackdown.

One poignant argument for the bill came when Democratic Rep. Laura Fine of Glenview said her husband lost an arm in a crash caused by a distracted driver. "A phone call is not that important," said Fine. "If your family is impacted by a distracted driver, it is devastating."

Another D'Amico bill, pushed by Secretary of State Jesse White, would stop the issuances of graduated driver's licenses to anyone under age 18 who has an unresolved traffic ticket. The bill is named for Kelsey Little, a Minooka teen who was seriously injured in 2011 when she was struck by a vehicle driven by a teenager with a learner's permit.

The third bill would ban drivers involved in fatal crashes from receiving only court supervision, a mild form of probation.



