

Senate committee approves car cellphone ban

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SPRINGFIELD — A statewide ban on the use of hand-held cellphones while driving a car is one click closer as an Illinois Senate committee voted 12-3 Tuesday to recommend its passage.

On March 1, the measure narrowly passed in the Illinois House by a 64-46 vote and is now making its way through the Illinois Senate.

Senate sponsor state Sen. John Mulroe, D-Chicago, argued that a hand-held cellphone is a dangerous distraction, particularly when dialing a number. Mulroe said that if a driver looks down for several seconds, at a speed of 55 mph, that driver could travel the length of a football field without seeing the road.

State Rep. Laura Fine, D-Glenview, testified about her husband, who lost an arm when a distracted driver crossed the center line and drove over his car.

“There is no phone call that is so important that you need to stop paying attention to what you are doing and take your eyes off the road to dial that phone,” Fine said.

When a driver is distracted, “it’s a matter of seconds before you kill someone or maim someone,” Mulroe said. “Not only have you affected that person’s life, but your own. You’ll have to live with that for the rest of your life.”

Already, about 76 Illinois communities have some restrictions on use of hand-held cellphones while driving, which was another reason Mulroe promoted the measure to provide uniformity so Illinois cellphone users know where they might get ticketed.

The measure is House Bill 1247.