

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Members of the House of Representatives

FROM: Representative Jaret Gibbons

DATE: February 26, 2015

SUBJECT: Daniel's Law - Enhanced Penalties for Death or Injury Resulting from Distracted Driving

In the near future, I intend to introduce legislation amending Title 75 (Vehicles) and Title 18 (Crimes and Offenses) of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, enhancing penalties for distracted driving that results in a severe injury or death.

This legislation is entitled "Daniel's Law" for Daniel Gallatin, a father, grandfather, military veteran, and fireman of nearly 40 years who was killed in May of 2013 when the motorcycle he was riding was hit from behind in Lawrence County by a woman who was texting while driving. The following year, the woman pleaded guilty to involuntary manslaughter, reckless driving, and texting while driving. During the sentencing, the judge in the case was quoted as saying, "changes need to be made in the severity of the laws governing cell phone use while driving."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving led to 3,328 deaths in 2012 and approximately 421,000 people were injured in automobile crashes involving a distracted driver. This kind of irresponsible and reckless behavior has very real and, all too frequently, life changing consequences.

Studies have demonstrated that distracted driving can be just as dangerous as drunk driving. As such, I will be introducing legislation that will bring penalties for distracted driving incidents that result in severe injuries or death in line with penalties for similar drunk driving offenses, such as homicide by vehicle and aggravated assault while under the influence of alcohol, as well as involuntary manslaughter.

We have an opportunity and an obligation to send a message that distracted driving is unacceptable. Please join me in supporting this important legislation that will help protect the lives of Pennsylvanians.