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[Technology](#), [Mobile Phone](#)



Jeff Simmons Professor Martin ENC 1101-0010 27 April 2010 How To Save A Life At age 16, Brittany Johnson was a typical teenage girl; she had a loving family, a high school boyfriend, and her own car. However, Brittany will never get married, never have children, and never have her own house. Why? Brittany died September 7, 2009. The culprit – texting while driving. While captaining her Chevrolet Lumina, Brittany decided to text her mother, distracting her from the road ahead. Instead of hitting the send button, Brittany's life hit the end button, as she drove off an embankment, went airborne, and smashed into a utility pole (Friedman, pars. 2-4). Stories like Brittany's raise questions over whether or not texting while driving should be banned. Nowadays it is growing exceedingly common to see drivers using the texting application while maneuvering their vehicle. To end the use of text messaging while operating a vehicle, legislatures need to create stern laws banning the use of the texting while driving, preventing tragedies such as Brittany Johnson's from occurring on a daily basis. Due to the teenagers' obsessions with the new applications cell phones now offer, text messaging, they are more likely to be involved in a car accident where they find themselves distracted by either a received or sent text. In a report published by Matt Sundeen, a transportation expert at the National Conference of State Legislatures, he writes, " 66% of drivers ages 18 through 24 use wireless devices to send or receive texts messages while driving" (20). To put it into perspective, University of Central Florida harbors over 53, 000 students across its campus. Assuming all of its students carry a license, that would mean that over 34, 000 students text while driving, putting them at an immense risk of driving haphazardly. Taking that into account, according to

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, “ Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for U. S. teens, accounting for more than one in three deaths in this age group” (“ Teen Drivers” par. 1). By accompanying this staggering statistic with the previous statement, the result is a palpable equation for complete disaster and tragedy. To combat this frightening correlation, laws need to be developed to significantly alter the attitudes of distracted teenage drivers across the nation. It would be an understatement to say texting while driving is a distraction; some compare the inappropriate use of cell phones to driving while drunk, which we all know it not only illegal, but horrific. In an experiment conducted by Michael Austin, a writer for Car and Driver magazine, he examines whether people are more aware in their vehicle when they are typing a text message, receiving a text message, or driving under the influence. Astonishingly, the results illustrated that driving while typing a text message are much more risky than driving under the influence (Austin, pars. 1-3). Therefore, if driving while drunk is illegal, then texting while driving should also be prohibited and equally punishable by law. If people hold a negative view toward drunk driving, then why don’t they have the same mindset when it comes to texting and driving? Well, actually most do; they just do not have a legitimate reason to stop texting because it is not against the law. Therefore, a law would confirm peoples’ beliefs that texting behind the wheel is not an acceptable behavior. Additionally, automobile accidents caused by texting are putting an unnecessary economic burden on the public. In many car crashes where texting is present, drivers veer off the road and into others’ properties, causing extreme damage. According to research conducted by Matt

Sundeen, he concludes that distraction related crashes, including texting while driving, trigger as much as \$184 million of property damage every year (21). So, not only are drivers putting themselves at risk, but their neighbors should be aware as well. Therefore, people in communities need to become proactive, changing their normally relaxed attitudes toward drivers in their neighborhoods. It is their children who are playing on the sidewalks and their yards that are being torn up when drivers aimlessly slam into them.

However, a law banning texting behind the wheel would take that burden off of community members' chests and put it on the police departments of communities all around the nation. In addition to the dangers texting while driving has on people operating their vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians need to beware of the progressive problem. On March 1, 2008, Kiera Coultas, of Southampton, England, was replying to a message when she hit biker Jordan Wickington. Coultas was texting when she hit the oncoming bicyclist, as well as traveling fifteen miles per hour over the thirty mile per hour speed limit. As a result of the incident, Coultas was sentenced to four years in prison and banned from driving for an additional five years (" Woman Driver" par. 8). Moreover, the article explains the laws regarding texting while driving in England. The author writes, " By law, anyone caught using a mobile phone while driving receives a £60 fine and three points on their license" (" Woman Driver" par 25). In view of the fact, there is a law banning the use of a phone while driving, the attitudes and actions of people in the United Kingdom differ from those in America. As previously mentioned, 66% of teenagers in America admit to texting behind the wheel. In the UK, however, only 45% admit they text behind the wheel (" Woman Driver" par.

26). To magnify the difference between the two independent states, one may want to revisit the University of Central Florida statistic visited earlier. Using the American percentage, 34, 000 of the 53, 000 students text while driving. Compared to the American value, only a little over 23, 000 students would text, demonstrating that the beliefs and actions of people in England changed as a result of an actual law. That is a drastic difference of 9, 000 students - 9, 000 lives that will not end like Brittany Johnson's. Many states have already begun to enact laws banning the use of texting applications. "Text messaging is forbidden altogether behind the wheel in nineteen states and D. C., and an additional nine states forbid teen drivers from texting while driving" (Andrews, par. 11). Legislators are starting to take the necessary steps to prevent the deaths of innocent people, however; the question arises whether we should have a nation wide ban rather than individual state bans? Drivers traveling through different states might not know the current law of texting and driving in the state that they are in. A nation wide ban would end all the confusion. Most, if not all, legislators agree that drivers should not text while driving, but many do not think that making it a law would be appropriate. They cite several reasons for this opinion. First, many elected officials do not think that a law banning text messaging while driving would be easy to patrol and enforce. Sheriff Kirk Taylor from Pueblo Country agrees, saying, "Philosophically I think it's a great idea but it is going to be extremely difficult to enforce... it will be difficult for officers to determine whether an individual is actually texting" (Perez, par. 2). Basically, Taylor believes this proposed law would create a number of problems, including false accusations against people. For instance, one could say they were

discriminated against when they received their traffic violation. While this argument can be made, it can be made of any law in the rule book. It would not be too difficult to determine if a driver was texting while driving. If a driver's eyes are off the road, not paying attention to his/her surroundings, he/she should be pulled over for reckless driving. The whole idea behind this law is to keep drivers alert and attentive. By encouraging drivers to keep their eyes on the road and not on their texts, safer roads and highways would be provided for the general public. Additionally, some people dismiss the idea of requiring a law banning texting while driving because they say not to text while driving should be common sense. Alberto Gutier, director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, believes that texting while driving is a problem. Nevertheless, he thinks that the government should not institute a law forbidding it. He continues this theory when he says, "... people just need to use common sense while driving" (Meacham, par. 15). Although it may seem like common sense not to drive and text simultaneously, one may need to consider the facts. For example, in a survey conducted by The AAA Foundation, it was found that over 20% of people text while driving even though over 90% acknowledge that their actions are not safe (" Safety Culture" 2). In essence, this argument can be made for any law. For instance, everyone knows to stop and proceed with caution at a stop sign, so should there not be a written law to punish those who do not follow the norm? Absolutely not. It should not be assumed that people always behave in their best interest and their own safety. If that were the case, no one would smoke cigarettes or ride motorcycles without a helmet on. Likewise, one cannot assume people will stop texting while driving unless the legislators legally

prohibits texting. To magnify the argument in favor of determining it illegal to text and drive, one should ask the parents of Bailey Goodman, Hannah Congdon, Katherine Shirley, Meredith McClure, and Sarah Monnat. All five of these girls were tragically killed when the driver, who was texting, swerved their car into oncoming traffic (" Teen Car Crash" 2). Instead of decorating and planning for their daughters eventual wedding days, their mothers are now forced to decorate the sites of their burial spots. Tragic, is it not? Well, until the government decides to ban texting behind the wheel, promoting an anti-texting sentiment, drivers beware, for no one is safe in today's text and drive society. Works Cited Andrews, Michelle. " The New Rules of the Road." U. S. News & World Report 147. 4 (2010): 6-9. Academic Search Premier. EBSCO. Web. 21 Apr. 2010. Austin, Michael. " Texting While Driving: How Dangerous is It?" Caranddriver. com. June 2009. Web. 22 Sept. 2009. . Friedman, Corey. " Family, classmates gather at memorial for Stanley teen killed in wreck." GastonGazette. com. 7 Sept. 2009. Web. 22 Sept. 2009. . Meacham, Nathan. " State Ban on Texting While Driving Difficult to Enforce, Official Says | The State Press - An Independent Daily Serving Arizona State University." ASU News | The State Press | Arizona State University. 23 Sept. 2009. Web. 15 Apr. 2010. . Perez, Gayle. " Texting While Driving Ban Hard to Enforce, Officials Say." The Pueblo Chieftain - Your Print and Online News Source for Southern Colorado. 1 Dec. 2009. Web. 15 Apr. 2010. . " Safety Culture." Msnbc. com. 27 July 2009. Web. 21 Sept. 2009. . Sundeen, Matt. " Driving While Distracted." State Legislatures Vol. 34 No. 5 May 2008: 20-21. SIRS Researcher. Web. 21 September, 2009. " Teen Drivers: Fact Sheet." Cdc. gov. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 26 Jan. 2009. Web. 21

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