



## Driving on the Right Side of the Road

### Introduction to the Legislative Process

## Learning About the Texas Legislative Process Through Bills Related to Traffic Safety

Driving on the Right Side of the Road (DRSR) has developed a wide variety of materials through collaboration with experienced, certified teachers to help teach students in grades K-12 about traffic safety. The traffic safety content is presented in conjunction with social studies, language arts, and even math curriculums.

In this activity, best suited for a social studies or government class, students will learn about the legislative process in Texas through bills related to traffic safety. Inside this brochure are summaries of 13 traffic safety-related bills that were pre-filed for the 2013 legislative session. Using these traffic safety-related bills as a jumping off point, students can learn how a bill becomes a law, learn about the role of committees and subcommittees in the legislative process, and analyze proposed legislation.

This brochure also includes a summary of how to access these and other bills online through the Texas Legislature Online website, <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/>. By going on the web and finding the bills described herein, students can track these bills as they move through the Texas legislature during the 83rd legislative session. Following these bills throughout the session will provide the students a perspective on how difficult it is to get a law passed. In addition, by looking at the full text of these bills, students can debate the advantages and disadvantages of each proposed law. For example, there have been multiple bills pre-filed this session that relate to regulating the use of a cell phone while driving. The students can compare the different proposed laws that are all on the same topic, discussing pros and cons, and finally selecting which bills they think would be most effective if they were to become law. For help planning activities, see the DRSR lessons "How a Bill Moves through the Texas Legislature" and "Evaluating Proposed Traffic Safety Legislation." All of these materials can be found online at [http://www.tmcec.com/DRSR/Legislative\\_Packet](http://www.tmcec.com/DRSR/Legislative_Packet).

# Traffic Safety-Related Bills that have been Pre-Filed for the 83rd Legislative Session

## Pre-Filed in the Texas House of Representatives:

### HB 24

*Author:* Representative Trey Martinez Fischer

*Summary:* This bill seeks to create an executive commissioner for the prevention of driving while intoxicated. This person would be appointed by the governor and would monitor driving while intoxicated data collected in Texas, monitor other states for laws and programs that have been successful in reducing the number of driving while intoxicated offenses committed in those states, work with other departments to reduce alcoholism and the number of intoxication offenses committed in Texas, and make recommendations to the Texas Legislature. This bill would also create a driving while intoxicated prevention account, which would be funded by a cost of \$10 on each defendant who is convicted of driving while intoxicated.

### HB 27

*Author:* Representative Trey Martinez Fischer

*Summary:* The bill seeks to prohibit a driver from using a cell phone to read, write, or send a text message while driving a car unless the car is stopped, or the driver is peace officer or emergency response provider using the cell phone in connection with official duties. It would also make it so that a driver could be fined up to \$400 if the offense of texting-while-driving occurs in a school zone.

### HB 38

*Author:* Representative José Menéndez

*Summary:* This bill seeks to increase the penalty for anyone who alters, fails to install, or installs a counterfeit airbag in a vehicle. This bill would increase the punishment from a Class A misdemeanor to a state jail felony, and make it a first degree felony if the failure to install, the alteration of, or the installation of a counterfeit airbag resulted in the death of a person.

### HB 41

*Author:* Representative José Menéndez

*Summary:* This bill seeks to prohibit the use of a cell phone while driving a car. This bill would ban the use of a cell phone — including using it to dial a telephone number, or to read, write, or send a text message or email — unless the car is in park, the parking brake is applied, or the cell phone is a hands-free device. It would make this offense a misdemeanor.

### HB 63

*Author:* Representative Tom Craddick

*Summary:* Known as the Alex Brown Memorial Act, in honor of a 17-year-old girl from Wellman, Texas who died in a rollover accident on her way to school because she was texting and driving, this bill seeks to make it a crime in Texas for a driver to use a cell phone device to read, write, or send a text message, instant message, or email while driving a car, unless the car is stopped.

### **HB 69**

*Author:* Representative Eddie Lucio III  
*Summary:* This bill would amend the current law to ban the use of a cell phone to read, write or send a text message, instant message, or email while driving a car, unless the car is stopped.

### **HB 72**

*Author:* Representative Allen Fletcher  
*Summary:* This bill seeks to increase the penalty in a hit-and-run where the crash results in a death. Currently it is a third degree felony to flee the scene of a collision resulting in death; this bill would increase the crime to a second degree felony.

### **HB 108**

*Author:* Representative Patricia Harless  
*Summary:* This bill would amend the current law to prohibit the use of a cell phone to read, write, or send a text message, instant message, or email while driving a car, unless the car is stopped.

### **HB 260**

*Author:* Representative Bill Callegari  
*Summary:* Known as the Todd Levin Memorial Act, in honor of a man who died instantly when his car was struck by a drunk driver, this bill seeks to require that all persons convicted of driving while intoxicated have an ignition interlock device installed in their vehicle.

### **HB 295**

*Author:* Representative Eddie Rodriguez  
*Summary:* This bill seeks to create a Drowsy Driving Study Commission to study the effect of drowsy driving on highway safety. The commission would study the effects of sleep deprivation on people driving cars, determine scientific and legal standards regarding when a driver is sleep deprived, suggest appropriate sanctions for driving a car while sleep

deprived, and develop programs to educate drivers about the effects of driving while sleep deprived and train law enforcement officials to recognize the symptoms of sleep deprivation.

### **HB 307**

*Author:* Representative Joe Farias  
*Summary:* This bill would amend the law about bicycle lights. It would require that any person riding a bicycle at night, during the 30-minute period before sunset, or during the 30-minute period after sunrise, be equipped with a white light on the front of the bicycle that is visible from a distance of at least 500 feet and a red light on the back of the bicycle that is visible from a distance of 500 feet.

## **Pre-Filed in the Texas Senate:**

### **SB 28**

*Author:* Senator Judith Zaffirini  
*Summary:* Known as the Alex Brown Memorial Act, in honor of a 17-year-old a girl from Wellman, Texas who died in a rollover accident on her way to school because she was texting and driving, this bill seeks to make it a crime in Texas for a driver to use a cell phone device to read, write, or send a text message, instant message, or email while driving a car, unless the car is stopped.

### **SB 98**




*Author:* Senator Dan Patrick  
*Summary:* This bill seeks to increase punishments for crimes that involve intoxication, including driving while intoxicated and driving while intoxicated with a child passenger. Under this bill, a judge would not be allowed to grant deferred adjudication to someone who is charged with driving while intoxicated with a child passenger.

## How to Access Bills Online

Go to the Texas Legislature Online website: <http://www.legis.state.tx.us/>

To look up bills using the bill numbers provided in this brochure:

- In the center of the homepage, locate the "Legislation" tab. Then, from the dropdown menu that appears when you hold your mouse over the "Legislation" tab, select "Bill Lookup."
  - Type the bill number into the search box. Examples of formats for different bill numbers are given at the top of the page.
  - Next, select the legislative session that the bill was filed during. For the current session, which is the 83rd regular session, choose "83(R) – 2013."
  - Next, select the "Information Type" from the dropdown menu. If you are not sure what information you need, leave this section on "History."
  - Finally, click "Submit."
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- You are now on the "History" tab of the bill you were looking for. This page provides basic information about the bill. From here you can navigate to all the other information you will need using the other tabs at the top of the page, including:
    - "Text": the text of the bill, plus fiscal notes, analyses, and other documents relating to the bill
    - "Actions": actions that have been taken on the bill
    - "Companions": matching bills that have been filed in the other chamber
    - "Amendments": changes to the bill
    - "Authors": who the authors of the bill are
    - "Sponsors": who the sponsors of the bill are
    - "Captions": a short summary of what the bill is about
    - "Bill Stages": where the bill is in the legislative process

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