

# News

## New Distracted Driving Law Takes Effect in October

Drivers may be fined \$2,000 for using mobile devices behind the wheel

The Skanner News Staff

Oregon's legislature earlier this month closed a loophole in the state's regulation of use of electronic devices behind the wheel — making it illegal for drivers to touch their phones or other devices while driving. The law kicks in October 1.

House Bill 2597 passed July 6, the second-to-last day the legislature was in session. Sponsored by Rep. Andy Olson (D-Albany), Sen. Ginny Burdick (D-Portland) and Rep. Ann Lininger (D-Lake Oswego), the bill redefines "mobile electronic" device to make it easier to convict someone of distracted driving.

Driving while using a mobile device was already illegal in Oregon, but previous cases were often dismissed in court due to a loophole stemming from a 2015 Oregon Court of Appeals ruling. In the State of Oregon v. Esmirna Rabanales-Ramos, a state trooper pulled over a driver after noticing her face was lit with the glow from an electronic device. She failed a field sobriety test and was arrested for driving under the influence, but the court ruled the trooper did not have probable cause to pull Rabanales-Ramos over because he didn't see her speaking or pressing buttons. The court ruled that the existing law — which defined a mobile device as a device used to receive and transmit text and voice communication — only applied to drivers using the phone to communicate, as opposed to reading texts or email or social media sites.



HB 2597 clarifies the existing law, defining "mobile electronic device" as a device capable of text messaging, voice communication, entertainment, navigation, accessing the Internet or producing electronic mail. The law includes exceptions for commercial motor vehicle drivers and bus drivers using electronic devices in the scope of their work; those operating two-way citizens' band radio devices and utility workers using electronic devices related to their employment.

Drivers using their phones to summon emergency services, drivers using hands-free accessories and farmers and emergency workers using devices for work are also exempt from the law.

A driver's third or subsequent conviction within a 10-year period will carry \$2,000 fine. For first or second offenders, the court may waive fees on the condition that the driver pay for and take a distracted driving class. The law also requires the Oregon Department of Transportation to place signs on state highways notifying drivers of the new law and penalties.

## Black Families Believe Racial Inequality Growing in Schools



By Bria Nicole Stone  
NNPA Newswire  
Contributor

Black families overwhelmingly believe that their schools are underfunded, and that racial inequality is growing, according to a poll conducted by The Leadership Conference Education Fund and the

poll to "explore how Black and Latino parents and families view the American education system's success in educating their children," according to a press release about the survey.

The poll revealed that 90 percent of Black parents and families believe schools in Black communities are underfunded

been a lot of research that's come out lately that suggests an implicit bias that educators, who are mostly White, have towards Black and Latino children.

The press release about the poll said that the findings come at a critically important time for public education in the United States as states are currently developing education plans as part of their obligations under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

"These plans are states' opportunities to make a clear declaration about their belief in the education of all children and a commitment to ensuring children get the education they deserve," the press release said.

Republicans in the United States Congress continue to chip away at ESSA, making it harder for states to clearly define those commitments.

In March, Republicans voted to rollback accountability measures established by the Obama Administration, Education Week reported.

"The Obama-era accountability rules, finalized late last year, set ground rules for how schools must be rated for school-improvement purposes, specified the requirements of (and flexibility for) states dealing with high testing

“There has been a lot of research that's come out lately that suggests an implicit bias that educators, who are mostly White, have towards Black and Latino children

Anzalone Liszt Grove Research firm.

The Leadership Conference Education Fund, which is the education and research arm of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, developed

compared to White communities.

The poll also showed that almost 75 percent of Black parents and families believe that the education Black students receive is worse than what White students.

A report about the poll said that, "Among Black parents and family members whose child's teachers are mostly White, only 42 percent believe that schools are trying their best to educate Black students, 16 points below the share of those whose children have mostly Black teachers."

Liz King, the senior policy analyst and the director of education policy for The Leadership Conference Education Fund, said that there has

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### Project Updates

The Oregon Department of Transportation invites you to provide input on amendments to projects in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

On the 1st and 16th of each month, ODOT will post for review changes made in the previous 15 days to projects in the STIP; we invite you to check in regularly and provide comments.

Please visit:

[www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/STIP/Pages/STIPDocs.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/STIP/Pages/STIPDocs.aspx) (under the heading "STIP Amendments for Public Review").

Send comments to:

OregonDOTSTIP@odot.state.or.us  
or mail to: STIP Amendment,  
555 E. 13th St. NE, Salem, OR 97301

