

Testimony for SB144 - Eckhardt

While considering Senate Bill 144, I would like to submit the following points in favor of continuing to allow amateur radio operation while operating a motor vehicle.

1. While trying to reduce the number of vehicle crashes that result from using a cell phone while operating a moving vehicle, it is important to understand that it is not necessary or even not realistic to prohibit all wireless communication, including amateur radio operation, while operating a motor vehicle.
2. The use of wireless two-way communication devices such as those that operate in the amateur radio service as well as other licensed services do not have a history of causing vehicle crashes.
3. The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) license millions of two-way wireless communication devices, including amateur radios, specifically for use as mobile devices. If these devices were dangerous to use from a moving vehicle, the FCC would not permit mobile operation.
4. Amateur radio operators have been operating wireless devices from their vehicles for the past 80 years and have been doing so safely and responsibly.
5. More than 8,000 amateur radio operators across Kansas play vital roles in supporting communications and working with a variety of both government agencies and non-profit organizations, both at the State and National level, and they do this strictly on a voluntary basis and at no charge whatsoever to anyone they serve. Many of these activities involve using their radios while operating a motor vehicle.
6. Prohibiting all wireless two-way radio communication while operating a motor vehicle will also impact government agencies, local municipalities and private businesses.
7. The national organization for Amateur Radio (known as the ARRL) has Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) with many organizations detailing how amateur radio operators will be able to assist those organization's communications needs. These MOU's include organizations such as the American Red Cross, the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International (APCO), the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) including Citizen Corps, REACT International Inc., the Salvation Army & SATERN, the National Weather Service's SKYWARN, and Boy Scouts of America. Many times, assisting these agencies requires the amateur radio operator to use their radio equipment while operating a moving vehicle.
8. Changing the definition of "Wireless Communication Device" to more closely conform to the definition used at the federal level will prevent this legislation from prohibiting useful two-way wireless radio communication, avoid potential unintended consequences in the future, and still protect Kansas Citizens from the catastrophic effects of distracted drivers using their cell phones while driving.

Respectfully Submitted

Bob Eckhardt

Amateur Radio Call Sign - NØMEI