

Friday, June 1, 2012

## **Kasich signs texting-while-driving ban into law**

By Jim Siegel



Surrounded by family members of those killed by drivers distracted by cell phones, many of whom pressed lawmakers into action, Gov. John Kasich signed a bill today making Ohio the 39th state to ban texting while driving.

The new law, which takes effect in 90 days, also bans drivers under the age of 18 from using any electronic device, whether to text, make a call or do anything else.

“This is why we are doing this,” Kasich said, sitting behind the desk in his ceremonial office, holding a photo of 23-year-old Keith Homstad Jr. in his right hand and a photo of 16-year-old Dalton Ludwig in his left.

“These families are finding some relief by doing something constructive to help others,” he added. “It’s a hard road back, folks, when you don’t have a dad, when you lose your only son, when your soldier son is killed on leave. This helps them to heal.”

Homstad, of Johnstown, was killed while on leave from the Air Force in August 2010 while he was a passenger in a car driven by a 19-year-old woman who prosecutors argued was texting at the time of the crash. A judge said it was not proven that the woman was texting at that moment, but Homstad’s father, who was on hand for the bill signing yesterday, has little doubt.

Homstad Sr. called the law a good first step but would have rather seen texting made a primary driving offense for adults, instead of secondary offense, where an officer must first pull over a driver for something else, such as speeding.

“If anything, maybe it will create a mindset. If 50 percent of the folks adhere to it, there is a 50 percent greater chance of a life being saved,” Homstad said.

Ludwig, of Pickerington, was a student driver sitting in a parked car along the shoulder of I-270 in July 2010 when he was struck and killed by a man who was texting.

His father, Phillip, said the new law will be tough to enforce but “I think it’s a good educational tool to use” for young adults who think they can multitask behind the wheel.

“When we call, we text, and we drive, we endanger the lives of others,” said Kasich, who has more than 20 bills on his desk awaiting his signature, a result of the flurry of legislative action in the last two weeks.

The law is a primary offense for minors punishable by a \$150 fine and 60-day license suspension for a first offense, and \$300 fine and one-year suspension for repeat violations.

For the first 60 days after the bill takes effect, drivers will be issued warnings instead of tickets.

**Article continued here:**

**<http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2012/06/01/gov-kasich-signs-texting-while-driving-ban-into-law.html>**

###