

# Campus Voice

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{THE BLUE BANNER}

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## A roadside wake-up call

### Safety behind the wheel is the driver's responsibility



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Everywhere you look you see people talking on cell phones while driving, and while this may distract you, a nationwide ban won't stop it.

Recently, the National Safety Council, a group focused on preventing accidental injuries and deaths, called on legislators across the country to ban cell phone use and text messaging while driving.

While the NSC certainly watches out for the livelihood of America's citizens, such a ban runs contrary to our country's ideal of freedom.

America prides itself on freedom. We pay for this freedom by being responsible for our actions. If a person uses a cell phone while driving and causes an accident, the responsibility falls on that person.

If legislators pass such a law, this assumes people can't make decisions for themselves. Unlike a drinking law, which makes it illegal for people to have their blood-alcohol content above a certain level, a complete ban on cell phone use has no middle ground. Cell phones can be turned off in an instant while alcohol must run its course before a person can focus again.

A person who drinks a beer or two can drive home legally, so a person getting home late should be allowed to call from the road. Legislation should focus on moderation rather than a total ban for all because of a few extreme cases.

In North Carolina, the current law prohibits cell phone use for bus drivers and anyone under 18 years old while driving, according to the Governor's Highway Safety Association.

In addition to the law above, a text ban also exists for the same group of drivers.

Naturally, teenagers listen and abide by these laws.

Well, not quite.

A few years after the law passed for teenagers, a study in North Carolina found little change in cell phone use in cars before and after lawmakers crafted the law, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. Roughly 11 percent used cell phones before the law, compared to 12 percent after the law, according to a study cited by the IIHS.

Laws try to change behavior, but the teens in the study didn't stop using cell

phones. And if the laws didn't change teens, then what makes the NSC sure it will work for adults?

The kind of law the NSC wants to pass anticipates car wrecks caused by cell phone use while driving, incorrectly assuming cell phones are most distracting to a driver. Would it make sense to outlaw all other behaviors in a car just because something might happen?

No one could justify the passing of such laws and feel right about doing so. Because we do enjoy our freedom and responsibility in this country, we don't

need groups pressuring lawmakers into regulating our behavior. If we want legislators to be our parents, we'll let them know.

"There's a host of other things that cause people to be distracted," said Chief Bill Hogan of the Asheville Police Department.

People eat, fix their hair and change radio stations while driving, adding to the distractions on the road.

"I've seen on numerous occasions, at a traffic light, people reading newspapers," said Hogan.

These arguments against the ban don't sit well with the NSC or anyone else pushing for a nationwide ban. The big push for the ban results from the distraction cell phones cause while driving, according to the NSC.

Rubbernecking and tailgating distract drivers today just like yesterday. Nowhere on the highways of America does a distraction-free zone exist. So then why

all the angst about cell phone use in cars?

Cell phones only entered mainstream society in the last decade or so. They still remain a novelty and because so many people use cell phones while driving, they receive the attention.

Other distractions, although problematic when first noticed, remain an accepted part of American-driving culture.

Make no mistake, using a cell phone while driving remains dangerous and risky. We can only learn and educate others if someone becomes hurt from using a cell phone in a car.

If drivers want to use cell phones, they need to understand their driving abilities. A 16-year-old does not have the experience of a 50-year-old, and younger drivers should realize this. Similarly, if an older driver starts using a phone while driving, they should take the time to learn the new habit.

If the ban passes, the enforcement of the law becomes more important than the law itself. And if enforcement reduces the number of accidents caused by cell phone use while driving, then maybe other bans on distractions might not hurt.

Bans on other distractions must always take the middle ground. It's ridiculous to think a ban works with every person in every situation every time, and by focusing on the middle ground, legislators keep things in balance.

As it stands, the ban doesn't exist. Since the NSC cares about driver safety, they might consider focusing more of their effort on educating drivers on the dangers of cell phone use in cars. If they think laws stop all behavior, the group needs to take a look around.

Every American should decide on their own whether or not to use a cell phone while driving. By making up our own minds about the issue, we become more responsible citizens.

## In the blink of an eye, hit 90's band returns



By Cassidy Culbertson  
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The phrase "indefinite hiatus" conjures particularly agonizing memories for die-hard Blink-182 fans.

And Mark Hoppus' comment "Blink-182 is back," incites frenzied hope and absolutely overwhelming excitement.

In 2005, the prolific '90s pop-punk group disbanded – a bitter personal break-up and sudden halt that shocked and depressed fans.

Blink-182 took the stage together for the first time in four years on Sunday at the Grammys, announcing their full-scale return. Within seconds, the band's Web site transformed from dated 2006 blog posts to a bold new image, affirming the group's summer 2009 reunion.

"I'm shaking. I'm crying. I can't breathe. It was the most epic thing I've seen in my entire life," Shonna Bell, a Blink-182 fan said Sunday night, echoing the sentiments of many.

I didn't resort to tear-streaked hyperventilation, but the announcement filled me with a bubbly energy.

Something about the reunion of these three guys, who wrote the first parental-advisory CD I ever purchased, reuniting motivates me to do crazy things, like go to the gym and do laundry.

Blink insists the reunion wasn't about money, but one based on forgiveness and friendship. Blink-182 is, again, simply best friends making music.

"Mark, Tom and Travis," the energetic trio fueling Blink-182's career, united in 1998. "Enema of the State," the first to include all three members, rocketed the band from punk obscurity to worldwide

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