

United States (U.S.) Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx praised Illinois Governor Pat Quinn for signing into law a bill amending the Illinois Vehicle Code to ban handheld cell phone use for all Illinois drivers.

"Safety is our top priority, and I commend Governor Quinn and the Illinois legislature for their decision to ban the use of handheld cell phones for all drivers," said U.S.

Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. "Distracted driving is a dangerous epidemic, and this new law is a critical step toward creating safer roads for everyone in Illinois." The law becomes effective January 1, 2014, and strengthens Illinois's 2009 law that banned sending or reading text messages while driving. Under the new law, drivers caught talking on a phone while driving can be stopped and ticketed by police, except in emergency situations. Fines for a first offense are \$75, and increase by \$25 for subsequent offences, to a maximum of \$150.

"Talking on a cell phone while driving is one of the most dangerous and irresponsible decisions a person can make," said National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Administrator David Strickland. "Motorists traveling on Illinois's roads will be safer as a result of this new law."

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) launched a national anti-distracted driving campaign to combat the growing trend of dangerous distracted driving behavior in America. To help further raise awareness, the U.S. DOT also launched www.distraction.gov, a dedicated website that provides the public with a comprehensive source of information on distracted driving.

With the addition of Illinois, 12 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam ban handheld cell phone use for all drivers. Illinois is among 41 states, the District of Columbia, the Virgin Islands and Guam that have previously banned text messaging for all drivers.