SENATE MEMORIAL 39

49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009

INTRODUCED BY

Pete Campos

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING AUTOMOBILE MANUFACTURERS AND THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE TO RESEARCH AND DEVELOP NEW UNOBTRUSIVE VEHICLE TECHNOLOGIES TO REDUCE DRUNK DRIVING.

WHEREAS, the department of transportation cites alcohol involvement in forty percent of all fatal traffic crashes that occur in the state, making alcohol-related traffic deaths the single largest component of all traffic fatalities; and

WHEREAS, according to mothers against drunk driving, during a typical prom weekend in 2005, two hundred ninety young adults between fifteen to twenty years of age were killed in alcohol-related crashes in the United States, and one hundred ninety-eight of those deaths involved an impaired driver; and

WHEREAS, New Mexico has seen a significant reduction in the number of alcohol-related crashes since requiring that

ignition interlock devices be installed on the vehicles of all first-time drunk driving offenders; and

WHEREAS, the number of alcohol-related crashes declined thirty percent from 2002 to 2006, and the recidivism rate of New Mexico drivers after a DWI conviction dropped thirty percent since 2003, when the Ignition Interlock Licensing Act was enacted; and

WHEREAS, alcohol-related crash fatalities have dropped twenty-two percent over the past five years in New Mexico; and

WHEREAS, despite the strides made by the state to protect its residents from drunk drivers, New Mexico has still been plagued by tragedy and devastation to New Mexico families that can never be repaired; and

WHEREAS, a non-invasive, seamless technology to measure driver blood alcohol content and reduce the incidence of drunk driving should be pursued by the automotive industry with the intention to support a non-regulatory, market-based approach to preventing drunk driving; and

WHEREAS, the current technology of breath alcohol ignition interlock devices is too intrusive for more widespread use among the general public, but potential lives may be saved in the United States if motor vehicle technology limited vehicle operation to specified blood alcohol content levels; and

WHEREAS, a cooperative research agreement between industry and the national highway traffic safety administration was

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entered into in 2008 to explore the feasibility, the potential benefits of and the public policy challenges associated with a more widespread use of unobtrusive technology to prevent drunk driving; and

WHEREAS, devices being studied are intended to prevent alcohol-impaired drivers from driving their vehicles; and

WHEREAS, potential technology includes tissue spectrometry, which allows estimation of blood alcohol content by measuring how much light has been absorbed at a particular wavelength from a beam of near-infrared light reflected from the subject's skin, or touch-based systems that require skin contact; and

WHEREAS, potential technology also includes distant spectrometry, which uses a near-infrared or laser light that is transmitted to the subject from a source that receives and analyzes the reflected and absorbed spectrum, to assess chemical content of tissue or liquid in vapor, and no skin contact is required; and

WHEREAS, potential technology also includes electrochemical means, by which chemical-reaction-based devices such as transdermal and breathalyzer-based systems, or alcohol in the presence of reactant chemical systems that produce colorimetric changes measured by spectral analysis or semi-conductor sensors; and

WHEREAS, potential technology also includes behavior

detection systems that detect impaired driving through objective behavioral measures, including ocular gaze movement, gaze, eye movement and driving performance measures; and

WHEREAS, the long-term viability of the automobile industry and the protection of the jobs it provides to the American people is a great concern to New Mexicans;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that automobile manufacturers and the federal government be requested to research and develop new unobtrusive vehicle technologies to reduce drunk driving to ensure the safety of all New Mexicans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that state policymakers continue to explore emerging technology that may help New Mexicans avoid further DWI tragedy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the major automobile manufacturers, the governor's office, the department of public safety, the traffic safety bureau of the department of transportation and the national highway traffic safety administration.

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