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## **OLR Bill Analysis**

### **SB 484**

#### ***AN ACT CONCERNING DISTRACTED DRIVING AND THE SAFE OPERATION OF A MOTOR VEHICLE IN A HIGHWAY WORK ZONE.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill makes it a per se reckless driving violation to drive in a highway work zone while engaged in any activity prohibited under the state's distracted driving law.

The bill also adds video converters to the list of devices specifically considered "mobile electronic devices" under the distracted driving law. A "video converter" is a device created to transmit moving images, through a wired or wireless connection, to a television screen or similar device that is (1) described and limited under the applicable vehicle equipment law and (2) installed or used in a motor vehicle in full view of the driver when he or she is properly restrained in a seatbelt. The vehicle equipment law prohibits installing or using a television screen or similar device in a vehicle in a position where moving images may be visible to the driver while properly restrained in a seat belt, with exceptions for screens used for assistance while backing up, navigation, or vehicle control and information purposes, among other things. (It is unclear whether these exceptions apply to moving video transmitted to these screens through video converters.)

The law generally prohibits drivers from using a mobile electronic device while driving or typing, sending, or reading a text message with one (as is the case for using a handheld mobile telephone in these ways or to engage in a call). The bill expands the definition of "use" to include playing a video on a mobile electronic device that is in the driver's full view when properly restrained by a seatbelt. The bill also specifies that the distracted driving law's definitions apply unless the context otherwise requires. (Presumably, this allows the word "use" to be interpreted as its plain meaning in the context of using mobile electronic

devices or handheld mobile telephones. Current law defines “use” as holding a handheld mobile telephone to, or in the immediate proximity of, the user’s ear.)

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2026

### **DISTRACTED DRIVING IN A WORK ZONE**

Existing law prohibits driving recklessly for the surroundings and conditions (such as road geometry or weather). It specifies certain circumstances that constitute reckless driving per se, including driving more than 85 m.p.h.

The bill expands these per se reckless driving violations to include driving a motor vehicle in a highway work zone while engaging in any activity the state’s existing distracted driving law prohibits.

Under existing law, reckless driving is an unclassified misdemeanor, subject to a fine, up to 30 days (first violation) or up to 364 days (subsequent violations) imprisonment, or both. The fine for reckless driving in a work zone is generally \$200-\$600 for a first violation and up to \$1,200 for subsequent violations. The fine for distracted driving in a work zone is \$400 for a first violation, \$750 for a second violation, and \$1,250 for subsequent violations. These fine amounts are two times the standard amount because both violations are subject to the existing law doubling fines for various driving violations committed in a work zone (CGS § 14-212a).

Under the bill, a person cannot be prosecuted for both a reckless driving violation and distracted driving violation for the same offense. Under existing law, distracted driving violations are processed by the Centralized Infractions Bureau and may be processed by mail or online. Reckless driving is a crime and generally requires the violator to appear in court.

**BACKGROUND**

***Related Bill***

HB 5463 (File 417), favorably reported by the Transportation Committee, (1) explicitly prohibits driving while a moving image is visible to the driver, (2) reorganizes and revises the distracted driving law, and (3) makes distracted driving in a work zone a per se reckless driving offense.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable

Yea 37 Nay 1 (03/24/2026)