

Cellphone bill shelved

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Facing opposition, the sponsor of a bill that would ban the use of hand-held cellphones while driving shelved his own bill Monday in the House Transportation Committee.

State Rep. Mike Huval, R-Breaux Bridge, took the action after panel members criticized his measure, House Bill 797.

"I am against your bill because we are becoming a nanny state," said state Rep. Barry Ivey, R-Central and a member of the committee.

Huval stressed that his proposal would be a secondary offense, which means motorists could only be cited if they were stopped for a separate offense.

Louis Fey, chairman of the state Property and Casualty Commission, said the proposal stemmed from efforts to hold down insurance rates.

Fey said drivers are three times more likely to be in an accident while using a hand-held cell phone.

He said the state had eight such fatalities in 2012.

Rep. Terry Brown, No Party-Colfax, said he often sees drivers applying makeup or reading a newspaper.

"Those things should be covered too," Brown said, adding that Huval's bill could apply to numerous distractions.