FOR RELEASE: October 11, 2019  CONTACT: David W. Miller (916) 319-2069

Governor Signs Daly Bill Combatting Distracted Driving

Sacramento – Governor Gavin Newsom has signed Assembly Bill 47. The bill by Assemblymember Tom Daly (D – Anaheim) increases penalties for distracted driving.

AB 47 requires the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to assess a point on a driver’s license, under certain circumstances, if a motorist is convicted of a violation for operating a handheld wireless or communication device while driving.

"Driving while using a cell phone is a serious safety issue," Assemblymember Daly said. “Yet, under current law, the penalty for driving while using a cell phone results amounts to a small fine (oftentimes less than a parking ticket), which cannot be expected to change driver behavior.

“I appreciate Governor Newsom’s support for this bill, which makes the punishment for distracted driving similar to those for other dangerous driving violations, such as speeding or running a red light,” Daly added. “The risk of getting a point added to your DMV record will help discourage people from persisting in this dangerous practice.”

“We are grateful for the support of Governor Newsom and the efforts of Assemblymember Daly to improve driving safety in California,” said Kathy Sieck, Auto Club senior vice president of Public Affairs. “The Auto Club surveyed California drivers earlier this year and found that nearly half of the drivers who responded said they would stop using their smartphone while driving if violating the distracted driving law resulted in driver record points. That’s why we believe, in addition to education and public awareness campaigns such as our current ‘Don’t Drive Intoxicated. Don’t Drive Intexticated’ initiative, AB 47 will make drivers better and save lives.”

According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, in 2016, 3,450 people were killed by distracted drivers. A year earlier, in 2015, 391,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.
Currently, after fees and assessments, the total cost for a first-time ticket for improper use of a handheld device while driving is $162. However, prior to Assemblymember Daly’s AB 47, the penalty did not include negligent operator points. The point system is used by DMV to determine if a driver should be considered a negligent operator.

DMV may suspend or revoke a person’s driving privilege for being a negligent operator. An individual is considered a negligent operator if they receive four or more points in 12 months, six in 24 months, or eight in 36 months. With the exception of DUIs, points remain on your record for a total of 36 months.

DMV can assess points for a variety of driving violations, including illegal U-turns, interfering with a driver’s control of a vehicle, driving too fast, or crossing a double line.

###

*Tom Daly represents the 69th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Anaheim, Garden Grove, Orange & Santa Ana.*