

Committee Reaches Compromise On Distracted Driving Bill In Massachusetts

November 16, 2019 at 8:42 pm

BOSTON (CBS) — Negotiators within the Massachusetts State House came to an agreement on distracted driving legislation Friday night. The proposal puts restrictions on hand-held devices while driving.

Both the House and Senate passed their own versions of the law earlier this year. One of the largest differences was how the bill dealt with racial profiling concerns.

A conference committee has been negotiating differences since June 19. Lawmakers tried but were [unable to come to a compromise](#) before the August recess.

The language of the compromised legislation has not been made public yet. The final vote is expected next week.

Emily Stein lost her father in a distracted driving case in April 2011. “The world lost a really good soul that day,” she said. “When it (the bill) is signed by Governor Baker it will feel like all of our effort will make sense.”

Howard Stein, 61, was killed by a teen who was programming her GPS while she was driving home.

The pain still cuts deep for Emily Stein, which is why she’s pushing hard for the bill. It would require devices like cellphones to be in hands-free mode.

“Right now you are not allowed to text, but you can look at it, you can answer the phone, and we know that that often leads to fatal and tragic consequences,” said Stacy Thompson, executive director of Livable Streets Alliance.



Emily Stein with her father Howard Stein. (Photo Courtesy: Emily Stein)

On Sunday, dozens will gather at the State House for a vigil and day of action to coincide with International World Day of Remembrance to honor those who've been impacted by distracted driving.

“Road fatalities are international health crisis,” Thompson said. “We are incredibly grateful to the administration and to the Legislature to have really taken the hands-free bill seriously.”

For Stein, who started her own non profit called Safe Roads Alliance, she can only share with her grandchildren how special her father was.

“He would've been such a great grandpa,” she said. “And that's the hardest part.”