



More distracted driving nonsense:

Retiring **Senator Jay Rockefeller IV (D-WV)** recently chaired a [day-long summit on distracted driving](#) that featured appearances by representatives of **Apple, Google, Samsung, AT&T, General Motors, Toyota** and others. The meeting was called and hosted by the US Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation which is seeking "more robust technological solutions to distracted driving."

Rockefeller, the Senate Commerce Committee

chairman, said he wants to spur automakers and suppliers to come up with "technological solutions to distracted driving." He decried the "glut of nonessential technology that has nothing to do with the task of driving."

The West Virginia Democrat contends that too much attention is paid to providing drivers with the features and connectivity they get on their smartphones.

"We are all aware that distracted driving is unsafe but so many of us, including myself, are tempted to use our phones while we are driving," Rockefeller said in a posting on his Facebook page. "My hope is that we can spur existing or new technology that will encourage drivers to keep their hands on the wheel and their eyes and minds focused on the road."

"I see no reason drivers should be able to update their social-media profiles or compare restaurant and hotel reviews while behind the wheel," Rockefeller said in a statement. He added: "Perhaps we should be looking to limit the functionality of mobile and built-in technologies, rather than accommodate them."

The comments by Senator Rockefeller set the stage. The "solutions proposals" that they were looking for were to entirely ban the use of mobile phones while driving. Rockefeller warned automakers and suppliers that if they don't regulate distracting systems in cars, legislators will do it for them.

This thinking is virtually identical to what caused the Prohibition laws that banned liquor use in the US for many years. The Prohibition laws didn't work because the vast majority of the population were opposed to them and were ultimately repealed. The use of mobile phones while driving is highly popular with a large number of people. Furthermore, a good body of data suggests that the use of a mobile phone can be made relatively safe with the use of hands-free technology.

The National Safety Council (NSC) proposed that all use of mobile phones by drivers be banned and technology installed in automobiles to enforce this ban. The representatives from other organizations seemed mostly to be Federal Affairs bureaucrats and had little input of any significance.

Rather than a federal law that would ban the use of mobile phones while driving, a much more appropriate law would be one that mandated the use of hands-free technology. Legitimate studies have shown hands-free technology is highly effective in reducing the distraction of using a mobile phone while driving. Despite this, we only have 12 states that have laws that mandate the use of hands-free technology when using a mobile phone while driving.

Senator Rockefeller should re-focus his effort on getting a federal law passed that requires the use of hands-free technology when using a mobile phone while driving.