

# Lanier Law Group Clarifies What North Carolina's Distracted-Driving Law Actually Requires for Drivers in 2026

*The NC Hands Free Act Isn't the Law Yet – But Drivers Must Follow Distracted Driving Laws Already On the Books*

DURHAM, NC, UNITED STATES, June 8, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Lanier Law Group](#) clarifies that the NC Hands Free Act (Hands Free NC) isn't the law – at least not yet. Senate Bill 797 is currently in committee with the North Carolina Senate. A previous bill, Senate Bill 526, did not become law in 2025.



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*Lisa Lanier*

Today, North Carolina's texting while driving law is N.C.G.S.

§ 20-137.4A. The law prohibits texting while driving and reading emails and texts while driving. But it is not a hands-free law.

Currently, NC is not a hands-free driving state.

N.C.G.S. § 20-137.4A., North Carolina Senate Bill 526.

Current Status of NC as a Hands-Free State

North Carolina legislators have introduced two laws that would make NC a hands-free state: Senate Bill 797 and Senate Bill 526. Senate Bill 797 is currently active in the 2025-2026 legislative session, but legislators have not passed it into law.

The NC Hands Free Act – Senate Bill 526

In 2025, eight North Carolina Senators sponsored Senate Bill 526. Titled The Hands Free NC Act, the law would have prohibited operating a motor vehicle while:

1. Holding a wireless device in your hand.
2. Watching a video or movie.
3. Communicating by video.
4. Texting on a wireless communications device.

If passed, a violation would have been an infraction, punishable by a \$100.00 fine. Penalties would have increased for repeat offenses. Violation while driving a school bus would have been a Class 2 misdemeanor.

General Assembly of North Carolina Sessions 2025, Senate Bill 526.

What is the status of NC Senate Bill 526?

NC Senate Bill 526, The Hands Free NC Act, was filed on March 25, 2025. It was referred to the Committee On Rules and Operations of the Senate on March 26, 2025.

There has been no additional action on NC Senate Bill 526. Legislators did not vote on it. It did not become law.

North Carolina General Assembly, Senate Bill 526.

Hands Free NC – Senate Bill 797

On March 21, 2026, NC Senators Jim Burgin, Kevin Corbin and Jay J. Chaudhuri filed Senate Bill 797. The proposed law is similar to Senate Bill 526. If passed, the law would prohibit drivers from holding a wireless communications device in their hands. It would also prohibit watching videos, video chatting and texting while driving.

North Carolina General Assembly, Senate Bill 797.

What is the status of NC Senate Bill 797?

As of June 1, 2026, NC Senate Bill 797 has been referred to the Committee On Rules and Operations of the Senate. It has not been voted on. No further action has been taken at this time.

General Assembly of North Carolina Sessions 2025, Senate Bill 797.

Confusion About the Law's Status

Hands-free driving laws are spreading quickly across the United States. New York was first to ban hand-held cell phone use while driving in 2001. Since then, 33 states have gone hands-free.

Hands-free laws are now the majority rule in the United States. So, when North Carolina Senators proposed a hands-free law in 2025, many people assumed it was the law. Facebook users shared posts announcing the new law more than 3,000 times. Local television and radio stations reported that the law went into effect December 1, 2025.

The only problem is, it didn't.

Lawmakers say that they are still hopeful to pass a NC hands-free law soon. For now, North Carolina's texting while driving law remains in effect to curtail distracted driving.

WRAL, Fact Check, N.Y. Veh. & Traf. Law § 1225-c, 2001., GHSA Governors Highway Safety Association, Distracted Driving.

## North Carolina's Texting While Driving Law

Even though North Carolina is not a hands-free state, it has a texting while driving law.

The NC texting while driving law is N.C.G.S. § 20-137.4A. The law prohibits entering multiple letters or text in a device to communicate while driving. It also prohibits reading electronic messages, except for caller ID information and contacts stored in a phone.

In addition, North Carolina law prohibits reckless driving. Reckless driving is broadly defined, and may include distracted driving in especially dangerous circumstances.

North Carolina Texting While Driving Law, N.C.G.S. § 20-137.4A., North Carolina Reckless Driving Law, N.C.G.S. § 20-140.

## Lanier Law Group Protects Accident Victims

Lanier Law Group, as featured in Is That Legal's article, "[List of Critically Acclaimed Car Accident Lawyers in Durham, NC](#)," is a car and accident and personal injury law firm with offices throughout North Carolina. With thousands of clients served and decades of experience, we've seen how distracted driving hurts innocent people.

[Lanier Law Group, P.A.](#) represents clients in car accident compensation claims. Contact us to discuss your case.

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