

A silent epidemic is sweeping America and as citizens it is our job to rise up to find a cure. Eleven teenagers are casualties in the battle against distracted driving every day. Distracted drivers, specifically, people texting and driving, are at fault for all of those senseless deaths. It is high time we band together as nation, tired of having to bury our loved ones prematurely, to find a solution to our growing problem. The nation's tragic texting and driving epidemic can be solved by harsher consequences for cited drivers, celebrity endorsements, and free education concerning the problem.

Drivers who participate in texting and driving are rarely caught, as evidenced by the 29 texting and driving citations written by the Toledo police department since 2013. Due to the fact texting and driving laws are so hard to enforce, stricter laws should be in place to make an example out of those who are cited. If an offender is under the age of 18, according to the Ohio Revised Code, said driver will face a 60 day license suspension and a \$150 fine for their first offense. Consequences for the driver grow in severity as infractions grow in numbers. However, consequences for the crime in Ohio vary by age. Drivers over the age of 18 should also be held to these same standards as a way of showing young drivers this behavior is never acceptable no matter their age. Consequences should be greater for those who put other's lives at risk over something as senseless as texting while driving.

According to a study by Harris Interactive, 45% of Americans believe celebrities have a large and positive impact on what they are promoting. With celebrity help, an ad campaign could be incredibly successful in reaching almost half of the population of the United States. An excellent example of this would be the 'We are the World' campaign of 1985. That particular campaign raised over \$68 million dollar for the cause. The money raised could be donated to organizations that educate drivers on the dangers of texting while driving or be used to fund safe driving incentive programs. If the same strategy of using a celebrity's fame for a good cause is applied to stop texting and driving, the problem could be eradicated completely.

Less than all drivers admitted to knowing sending a text or email is dangerous while driving; yet, 40% of American drivers claim it is a regular habit for them, according to a recent AT&T survey. All drivers should know the risks associated with texting and driving before they partake. The same AT&T survey found that 49% of business commuters have texted while driving. To counteract this lack of knowledge, resources should be available to all drivers on just how dangerous texting and driving is. With proper information circulated to drivers, the commonality of texting and driving will diminish.

Texting and driving no longer has to be a national problem if the country works together to put harsher penalties in place for cited drivers, see celebrity endorsements for ending texting and driving, and educate drivers on the perils of partaking. With the focus of drivers everywhere placed firmly on the road to safer driving, eleven teenagers a day can stay alive. Now is the time to finally see the solution to texting and driving enacted.