**2020 U DRIVE. U TEXT. U PAY. CAMPAIGN**

**SAMPLE OP-ED**

**PEAK VERSION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Date]**

**CONTACT: [Name, Phone Number, E-mail Address]**

**Note: Before filling in the names of the organization and organization spokesperson, you MUST contact them for permission to use their names in this press release. Also, you must get their approval for the language of their quotations, and any changes or additions they may require. Only after this is done should you issue the press release.**

**No Text Is Worth It: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.***

Distracted driving has become a deadly epidemic on our roadways claiming 2,841 lives on our nation’s roads in 2018, which represents 7.8 percent of all traffic crash fatalities that year. While the number is down from 2017, there isn’t an acceptable number of distracted-driving deaths. We see the devastation caused by drivers who take their hands off the wheel and their eyes off the road, so we’re working hard to remind everyone that texting while driving, and driving distracted—by phones, passengers, eating and drinking, or even tuning the radio—is a dangerous, and often illegal, habit.

The month of April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. **[Local Law Enforcement Office]** is teaming up with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to help spread the word about the dangers of distracted driving. From April 9 to April 13, 2020, we’ll conduct a high-visibility enforcement effort called *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* where law enforcement officers will step up enforcement efforts and issue citations for distracted-driving violations. The campaign exists to remind drivers of the consequences of their reckless actions, and continue to spread the message about the dangers of distracted driving.

According to NHTSA, between 2012 and 2018, nearly 23,000 people died in crashes involving a distracted driver. That’s 23,000 people who didn’t make it home because of dangerous, distracted driving.

While distracted driving can take many forms—using a GPS, applying makeup, interacting with other passengers, sipping hot coffee—the most dangerous behavior is texting and driving. The bottom line is this: If your attention is anywhere other than on the road, you’re distracted.

“All drivers have the power—and responsibility—to end these preventable crashes. We’ve taken an oath to protect the public, so we’re determined to get distracted drivers off the road. If that means issuing you a ticket to put an end to your bad habit, think of it this way: a ticket is less expensive than a crash,” said **[Local/State Official]**.

Young drivers are some of the most common offenders. Millennials use their cell phones to talk, text, and scroll through social media while behind the wheel. According to NHTSA, in 2018, 8 percent of people killed in teen (15-19) crashes died when teen drivers were distracted at the time of the crash.

Don’t want to get a ticket for distracted driving? It’s easy: focus on the road and not on your phone. If you need to text, then pull over and do not drive. If you’re driving, follow these safe driving tips:

* If you struggle with the urge to check your phone or to text while you drive, activate your phone’s “Do Not Disturb” feature, or place your phone out of reach by putting it in the trunk, glove box, or back seat to keep you from mindlessly grabbing it.
* Ask a passenger to be your “designated texter.” Give them access to your phone to respond to calls or messages.
* Do not engage in social media scrolling or messaging while driving. Those notifications will be waiting for you when you arrive at your destination. No text or comment is worth dying for.

Texting while driving is dangerous and illegal. We need every driver to help break the cycle. Remember: *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.*

For more information, visit [www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov](http://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov).

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