

## California May Ban Dogs From Driver's Seat

**Legislation cites dogs as distractions to drivers and aims to improve safety on roadways.**

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Drivers in California might have to teach their dogs a new command: "Don't sit" — behind the steering wheel, that is. A bill that would ban motorists in the state from carrying their pets on their laps was approved early this week by the state Assembly.

Assembly Bill 2233 by Assemblyman Bill Maze, R-Visalia, moves to the Senate on a 44-11 vote. The bill has no formal opposition, Maze's legislative aides say.

It applies to dogs and all other "live animals," furry, feathered, or scaled. Violators face a \$35 base fine if cited by the California Highway Patrol, and may be ordered to pay as much as \$150.

The main point that Maze wants to drive home is safety, said legislative director Laurie Paredes. Maze once witnessed a woman driving with three dogs on her lap, and that was a grave concern to him, Paredes says.

"It is purely about the safety of the driver of the car," she says, "and of the other motorists on the roadway. It is very straightforward."

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a driver-distraction bill that, beginning July 1, bans drivers from using cell phones without a hands-free device. However, most bills, if not vetoed, become law on Jan. 1 of the following year.