Currently 39 states and the District of Columbia have laws that address text messaging by all drivers.

A law to ban texting while driving will take effect and begin a sixth-month warning period this Friday, Aug. 31. Signed by Gov. John Kasich back on June 1, House Bill 99 makes texting behind the wheel illegal for motorists of all ages on a secondary enforcement basis. The offense can be cited only if another moving violation has occurred.

The bill also makes it illegal for drivers under age 18 to use an electronic wireless communications device in any manner. For novice drivers this means they can be ticketed for texting while driving and for talking on a cell phone. No ticket may be issued for a violation of either prohibition until after the six-month warning period.

“Texting while driving is the most dangerous of all distractions behind the wheel,” said Brian Newbacher, director of public affairs for AAA East Central. “The teen driving portion of the bill is very strong and AAA supports it 100 percent. AAA would like to see a primary enforcement ban for all drivers in the future but this is a great start.”

Motorists violating the law after the six-month warning period would be subject to a fine of no

more than $150. Teen drivers would be subject to having their license suspended for 60 days for a first offense.

A recent survey of the motoring public by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that 35 percent of motorists of all ages admitted to text messaging while driving. Nearly half of drivers ages 18 to 24 admitted to text messaging while driving.

AAA announced in 2009 that it will work to pass laws banning text messaging by drivers in all 50 states, citing strong public support for the laws and the danger of distracted driving. Ohio became the 39th state to ban texting behind the wheel with AAA working for passage of a texting while driving ban for approximately four years.

In a recent AAA survey, 95 percent of Ohio AAA members support a statewide ban of texting behind the wheel.

Currently 39 states and the District of Columbia have laws that address text messaging by all drivers. Ohio cities including Cleveland and Beachwood ban texting on a primary basis and those laws will take precedent due to Ohio's Home Rule laws. Studies have shown texting while driving to be an extremely dangerous distraction for drivers due to the extended time (an average of 4.6 seconds) spent not looking at the road.

AAA East Central is a not-for-profit organization with 80 local offices in Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky and New York, servicing 2.6 million members.