

## California Moves Closer to Ban Cats From Driver's Seat

**Legislation aims to improve safety on roadways.**

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A lap is no place to hold a cat when it comes to driving on California roads, according to state lawmakers. A ban on pets as companions behind the steering wheel passed the Assembly early this week.

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 cats and all other "live animals," furry, feathered or scaled. Violators face a \$35 base fine if cited by the California Highway Patrol. The fee could be as much as \$150 through penalty assessments.

The main point that Maze wants to drive home is safety, says legislative director Laurie Paredes. Maze once witnessed a woman driving with three dogs on her lap, which 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."

In Modesto, Calif., a driver and her pet cat were injured in April after the woman drove into a power pole when she was scratched by the cat on her lap, the Modesto Bee reported.

The alternative to sharing the driver's seat with a cat is at the discretion of motorists, Paredes says. The bill does not call for the tethering or caging of pets.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a driver-distraction bill that, beginning July 1, bans drivers from using cell phones without hands-free devices. Most bills, if not vetoed, become law January 1 of the next year.