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Wireless companies send mixed signals on texting and driving

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Vice Mayor



I just returned from an official trip to our state's capital in Tallahassee. I had a lot of things that I wanted to accomplish there, one of which is to strengthen our texting and phoning-while-driving laws.

I was informed that the companies providing wireless service seem to oppose this even though they are constantly asking you not to text and drive, but the main issue seems to be people unwilling to give up their privacy by having a policeman able to check their phone to prove that they were indeed texting or talking while driving.

Boo-hoo! I am fortunate enough to have an automatic filter in my vehicle in the person of my spouse who will simply not allow me to make or receive calls while I am driving. If you know this person you will understand that this is more fearful than a police officer pulling me over. At least I can talk to the police officer.

The day after returning from my trip, my co-pilot screamed as a car coming toward us veered into our lane and pulled back just in the nick of time. Guess what he was doing at the time?

As far as privacy is concerned, forget it. It is gone! Technology has taken over our lives whether you like it or not and my only suggestion is don't do anything wrong because you will eventually get caught. I don't know of a place that doesn't have security cameras monitoring the facilities except for the few small shopping centers locally that simply refused to make these additions for the security of their tenants. They are of course backed by the Florida Retail Association who I compare to the NRA in the amount of power they seem to have in their hands.

I personally spent many hours in Tallahassee trying to change some laws that

prohibit municipalities from insisting on this type of security in parking lots. I haven't totally given up yet.

How much privacy is left for us when:

- Someone can simply park a car outside of a Target store, open his laptop and see all of the credit card transactions and associated data from everyone who entered that store;

- The companies using those various toll registering devices can tell exactly what time you passed a certain location and how fast you were going, and

- Those red light cameras actually can capture a picture of you and your vehicle and your license plate.

Speaking of Target, the New York Times reported a father complaining to them about his teenage daughter getting ads for baby products as though they were trying to encourage her to get pregnant. They did this by using a thing called mosaic theory with which they tracked all her purchases and most of them were for nutritional supplements, scent free lotions, etc. The upshot, it turns out, that the teenager was — you guessed it — pregnant.

Anyone familiar with computers can tell you just how easy it is to gather all types of information on people, mostly for free. When I checked my FCC radio license it brought up a whole lot of stuff totally unrelated to my former hobby.

Electronic cameras are now so tiny and portable that they can be placed just about anywhere. There have been reports of guys attaching them to the top of their shoes to peek up women's skirts while shopping. To

each his own, but some of those photos may not be worth the effort.

Cell phones and tablets mostly have GPS systems in them that allow just about anyone to locate exactly where you are, plus there are social media websites that ask you to do this. It must be great for burglars, etc., but then again, they probably will get videoed when they break in. I will no longer purchase gas at a station that requires you to go inside and leave your credit card as you fill up. We recently

got a charge from Battaglia Shoes for \$1,800 even though we never entered their store. It happened almost immediately after filling up. Beware. I don't, or at least I think I don't, need to advise you not to respond to emails from your bank requesting confirmations, etc.

They don't do things that way, nor should you give information over the phone to anyone you personally do not know... That includes charities as well. It is just too easy to call, beg for funds for some needy cause and then ask for your credit card number and code.

I look back on the "old days" where we had no credit cards or computers and my mother had a little jar in the kitchen where she tucked any money left over after rent, shopping, etc., and used that cash to buy stuff. Now this will sound strange, but we actually ate dinner together as a family and discussed the day's events and my parents didn't have to shout "PUT THAT PHONE DOWN!...YES...I'M TALKING TO YOU!"

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