

2016 -- S 2514

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LC004877
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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2016

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES - DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL CODE
PROVISIONS

Introduced By: Senators Miller, DiPalma, Walaska, Felag, and Jabour

Date Introduced: February 25, 2016

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 31-1 of the General Laws entitled "Definitions and General Code
2 Provisions" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **31-1-3.1. Autonomous vehicles permitted.** – (a) For purposes of this section, the
4 following words shall, unless the context requires otherwise, have the following meaning:

5 (1) "Autonomous technology" means technology installed on a motor vehicle that has the
6 capability to drive the vehicle on which the technology is installed without the active control or
7 monitoring by a human operator. The term excludes a motor vehicle enabled with active safety
8 systems or driver assistance systems, including, without limitation, a system to provide electronic
9 blind spot assistance, crash avoidance, emergency braking, parking assistance, adaptive cruise
10 control, lane keep assistance, lane departure warning, or traffic jam and queuing assistant, unless
11 any such system alone or in combination with other systems enables the vehicle on which the
12 technology is installed to drive without the active control or monitoring by a human operator.

13 (2) "Autonomous vehicle" means any vehicle equipped with autonomous technology.

14 (b) A person who possesses a valid driver's license may operate an autonomous vehicle in
15 autonomous mode. For purposes of this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires, a person
16 shall be deemed to be the operator of an autonomous vehicle operating in autonomous mode
17 when the person causes the vehicle's autonomous technology to engage, regardless of whether the
18 person is physically present in the vehicle while the vehicle is operating in autonomous mode.

1 (c) An autonomous vehicle registered in this state must continue to meet federal
2 standards and regulations for a motor vehicle. The vehicle shall:

3 (1) Have a means to engage and disengage the autonomous technology which is easily
4 accessible to the operator;

5 (2) Have a means inside the vehicle, to visually indicate when the vehicle is operating in
6 autonomous mode;

7 (3) Have a means to alert the operator of the vehicle if a technology failure affecting the
8 ability of the vehicle to safely operate autonomously is detected while the vehicle is operating
9 autonomously in order to indicate to the operator to take control of the vehicle; and

10 (4) Be capable of being operated in compliance with the applicable traffic and motor
11 vehicle laws of this state.

12 (d) Federal regulations promulgated by the National Highway Traffic Safety
13 Administration shall supersede this section when found to be in conflict with this section.

14 (e)(1) Vehicles equipped with autonomous technology may be operated on roads in this
15 state by employees, contractors, or other persons designated by manufacturers of autonomous
16 technology for the purpose of testing the technology. For testing purposes, a human operator shall
17 be present in the autonomous vehicle such that they have the ability to monitor the vehicle's
18 performance and intervene, if necessary, unless the vehicle is being tested or demonstrated on a
19 closed course. Prior to the start of testing in this state, the entity performing the testing must
20 submit to the division of motor vehicles an instrument of insurance, surety bond, or proof of self-
21 insurance acceptable to the department in the amount of five million dollars (\$5,000,000).

22 (2) The original manufacturer of a vehicle converted by a third party into an autonomous
23 vehicle shall not be liable in, and shall have a defense to and be dismissed from, any legal action
24 brought against the original manufacturer by any person injured due to an alleged vehicle defect
25 caused by the conversion of the vehicle, or by equipment installed by the converter, unless the
26 alleged defect was present in the vehicle as originally manufactured.

27 (3) By February 1, 2018, the division of motor vehicles, in consultation with the division
28 of public safety, shall submit a report to the president of the senate and the speaker of the house
29 of representatives recommending additional legislative or regulatory action that may be required
30 for the safe testing and operation of motor vehicles equipped with autonomous technology.

31 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

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- 1 This act would permit the use of vehicles equipped with autonomous technology on
- 2 Rhode Island roads.
- 3 This act would take effect upon passage.

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