



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882

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Contact:
Representative Jim Ott (R-Mequon)
1-608-0486
Senator Alberta Darling (R-River Hills)
1-608-266-5830

Assembly Approves Tougher Drunk Driving Bills

Representative Ott and Senator Darling Applaud Bi-Partisan Vote

Madison - Driving in Wisconsin could be safer soon. On Thursday, the Wisconsin State Assembly approved two bipartisan bills, authored by State Representative Jim Ott and Senator Alberta Darling, aimed at getting drunk drivers off our roads. Representative Ott says the unanimous vote sends a strong message that our state is serious about stopping drunk driving.

"There have been many tragic cases of innocent people being killed or injured by drunk drivers in Wisconsin. Sadly, once again, we have a case where an outstanding public servant has been taken from his family, friends, colleagues and the community by a repeat drunk driver. Tougher penalties alone will not stop drinking and driving" said Representative Ott, "However, I believe they will have an impact and hopefully make our roads safer."

Even though alcohol-related crashes have decreased in recent years, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation reports that alcohol remains the single greatest contributing cause of fatal crashes. The bills take aim at both first-time and repeat drunk drivers:

[Assembly Bill 15](#) makes first-time drunk driving offenders appear in court. Not only is a first-time offense not a crime in our state, but offenders also don't even have to show up to face the charge.

[Assembly Bill 17](#) creates a mandatory minimum sentence of five years in prison for committing homicide while driving drunk. If a judge believes that

sentence is too harsh, they must put their reasons in writing.

State Senator Alberta Darling says she hopes these bills will stop the revolving door of drunk driving.

"If our laws treat repeat drunk driving seriously, hopefully people will start to get help and not repeat their mistakes. Our laws haven't been tough enough to deal with the problem," Darling said, "I hope that these changes will be a huge step in that direction."

The bills now head to the State Senate for further consideration.

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