

House Republican Press Release

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REPRESENTATIVE SCRIBNER BACKS TOUGHER DRUNK-DRIVING LAWS



HARTFORD- On Tuesday, February 19, State Representative David A. Scribner (R-Brookfield, Bethel) joined with fellow legislative leaders in announcing his support for strengthening Connecticut's drunk driving laws. Rep. Scribner serves as Ranking Member (House Republican Leader) of the Legislature's Transportation Committee.

The Legislature's DUI (driving under the influence) reform working group held a press conference at the State Capitol complex to outline potential components of new legislation. Rep. Scribner said that each of the proposals presented has merit and is worthy of consideration. He noted that legislators from both political parties symbolically stood side by side with representatives from Governor M. Jodi Rell's administration, all recognizing the need for new legislation.

"The Legislature's top responsibility must be to ensure public safety," said Rep. Scribner. "State by state, a variety of initiatives to protect us from intoxicated drivers have been put into effect. While we have had an opportunity to implement a variety of measures to address these issues and monitor their effectiveness in recent years, it is clear more must be done."

Measures presented for consideration during the press conference include three separate proposals.

Proposal #1 would make several changes in both the criminal and administrative per se laws. These changes would: Increase the "lookback" period considered for previous DUI offenses; expand the definition of "elevated blood alcohol content" to include operating a commercial motor vehicle with a blood-alcohol level of .04% or more; streamline the probable cause process in suspending licenses; expand the circumstances from which such blood test results can be used and make several changes to the administrative per se license suspension process.

Proposal #2 would make it illegal for anyone to possess an open alcoholic beverage container in the passenger area of a motor vehicle while the vehicle is on a Connecticut highway or a highway right-of-way. Under the proposal, a first offense would be an infraction that is subject to a fine of \$90. A second or subsequent offense would be a

violation, not an infraction, and a court appearance required. The fine would be \$200 for a second offense and \$500 for a subsequent offense.

Proposal #3 would modify driver's license suspension penalties for the crime of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs (DUI). It includes provisions to increase the suspension time for a first conviction to one year and require the person then only operate a vehicle equipped with an interlock ignition device for the following year. These devices are designed to prevent a person from driving when they detect a pre-set blood-alcohol level in the driver's breath sample.