

CONTACT: Kurt Gregory Erickson
President

PHONE: W. 703/893-0461
H. 540/882-4758
CELL. 703/625-2303

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 22, 2008

PENALTIES MORE THAN DOUBLE FOR
PROVIDING ALCOHOL TO TEENS IN MARYLAND
NEW MARYLAND LAW GOES INTO EFFECT NEXT WEEK

Annapolis, MD, Sept. 22 – Effective next week, fines for persons convicted of unlawfully providing teens with alcohol in Maryland more than doubles and can be as much as \$ 2,500 for a first offense.

Specifically – and as a result of two 2008 Maryland General Assembly bills (**HB 76** and **SB 166**) signed into law earlier this year by Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley – a new Maryland law going into effect on October 1, 2008 increases the fines for persons found guilty of unlawfully providing alcohol to those less than 21 years of age to as much as \$ 2,500 for a first offense and as much as \$ 5,000 for a second or subsequent offense.

Such represents a more than doubling of such fines from the current \$ 1,000 and \$ 1,500 levels for said first and subsequent violations.

“Simply put, this new law looks to narrow the pipeline of alcohol flowing to teens in Maryland,” said Kurt Gregory Erickson, President of the Maryland nonprofit organization, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), registered Maryland lobbyist and a proponent of anti-underage drinking and drunk driving legislation.

“With Maryland’s own data showing that more than a quarter of the state’s high school seniors have driven after consuming as much as four drinks, this new law is the very definition of public safety legislation,” continued Erickson.

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According to the Maryland State Department of Education's (MDE) most recently published Maryland Adolescent Survey (October 2005), "among adolescents, alcohol, a leading cause for impaired driving, is one of the most abused and, therefore, dangerous substances" citing said same report's findings that nearly two-thirds (63%) of Maryland's 12th graders reported drinking alcohol in the last year while nearly half (44.1%) reported drinking in the last month. In summary, the MDE report found that "many Maryland young people report fairly heavy alcohol consumption, especially high school seniors and tenth graders."

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found that young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol addiction than those who didn't begin drinking until age 21. In addition and according to WRAP, youth who drink alcohol participate in other risky behaviors including riding in a car with a drunk driver and driving impaired themselves.

This finding wasn't overlooked when Maryland's most recent adolescent survey also found that 27.3% of Maryland's driving 12th graders have "driven at least once after consuming one to four drinks."

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 31-percent of 15- to 20-year-old drivers killed in traffic crashes in 2006 had been drinking.

Founded in 1982, the Maryland non-profit Washington Regional Alcohol Program is an award-winning public-private partnership working to prevent drunk driving and underage drinking in the Washington-metropolitan area including in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. In addition to WRAP serving as project manager of Maryland's *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign – and through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy -- WRAP is credited with keeping the metro-Washington area's alcohol-related traffic deaths consistently lower than the national average. WRAP, however, may best be known to area residents via the organization's popular free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, *SoberRide*.

For more information, visit WRAP's web site at www.wrap.org.

(See 2004 Maryland Adolescent Survey at:
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/newsroom/special_reports/adolescent_survey.htm

See 2006 NHTSA "Young Drivers" Traffic Safety Facts at:
<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810817.PDF>

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