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NEW LAWS TARGETING REPEAT **DRUNK DRIVERS GO IN EFFECT IN** **VIRGINIA NEXT WEEK**

Richmond, VA, June 23 – With two new laws going into effect next week, Virginia’s net around persons repeatedly convicted of drunk driving on the Commonwealth’s roadways has gotten a little tighter.

Specifically – and as a result 2009 Virginia General Assembly bills signed into law this past spring by Virginia Governor Timothy Kaine (D) – two new Virginia laws going into effect on July 1, 2009:

- increase the penalties for persons sentenced to use ignition interlock devices because of a driving under the influence (DUI) conviction but driving without the same (HB 1805 & SB 889);
- and mandates the use of such ignition devices for persons twice convicted of DUI within ten years (SB 1463).

Ignition interlocks are electronic devices installed in motor vehicles connecting a breathalyzer to a vehicle’s ignition system. The devices prevent the starting of a motor vehicle if alcohol is detected on the operator’s breath.

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(more)

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Beginning on July 1, 2009, persons twice convicted of DUI in Virginia in a ten year period will be mandated to use ignition interlock devices for a minimum of six months. (Current Virginia law mandates the same for persons twice convicted of DUI within *five* years.) In addition, persons required to operate a vehicle in Virginia with an ignition interlock device but later convicted of driving *without* such will be both guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor as well as subject to having their driver’s license revoked.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), drunk drivers killed in traffic crashes are eight times as likely to have a prior DUI than fatally injured sober drivers.¹ Worse, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention studies have concluded that not only are persons whom have been arrested for drunk driving at greater risk for a future traffic fatality but that such risk “increases directly in relation to the number” of drunk driving arrests.²

In 2007, 378 persons were killed in alcohol-related crashes on Virginia’s roadways, according to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.³ Such figure represents an increase in such traffic fatalities from the previous year. In addition, Virginia recorded 28,787 convictions for driving under the influence in 2007, according to DMV.

Founded in 1982, the non-profit and McLean, Virginia-based Washington Regional Alcohol Program is a two-time winner of Virginia’s prestigious Governor’s Transportation Safety Award as well project manager of the Commonwealth’s statewide *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign. As a public-private partnership, WRAP works to prevent drunk driving and underage drinking in the Washington-metropolitan area including in Northern Virginia however the organization may best be known to area residents via its popular free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, *SoberRide*.

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

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¹ Source: NHTSA, see: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810985.PDF>

² Source: CDC, see: <http://www.cdc.gov/MMWR/preview/mmwrhtml/00032985.htm>

³ Source: Virginia DMV, see: http://www.dmvnow.com/webdoc/pdf/vacrashfacts_07.pdf