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DRUNK DRIVING INCIDENTS DECLINE **IN GREATER WASHINGTON**

NEW REPORT CITES SECOND YEAR DECREASES IN LOCAL DUI FATALITIES, INJURIES & CRASHES

Washington, D.C., Dec. 11 – For the second year in a row, the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities, injuries and crashes all declined in the Washington-metropolitan area in 2008 according to a preliminary report released today by the non-profit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP).

“The report’s findings appear to show the dividends of both highly-visible law enforcement deterrent efforts like the region’s Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign as well as increased public attention to the threat of drunk driving,” said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP’s President.

Today’s data will be contained in WRAP’s 17th-annual report, “How Safe are Our Roads?, A Data Report on the Impact of Drunk Driving on Highway Safety in the Washington Metropolitan Region” scheduled for full release later this month. The report was prepared by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) for the McLean, Virginia-based alcohol-education group.

Findings in the 2009 report include:

- **FATALS...**Local alcohol and or drug-related traffic deaths *decreased* by more than 20-percent (20.7%) between 2007 and 2008 (and from 116 to 92 such fatalities). Such represents a second-year consecutive decline in such deaths occurring in the Greater Washington area.
- **CRASHES...**Area traffic crashes attributed to alcohol and or drugs *decreased* by more than 21-percent (21.3%) between 2007 and 2008 (and from 5,015 to 3,946 such crashes). Such represents a second-year consecutive decline in such crashes occurring in the Greater Washington area.

(more)

- **INJURIES...** Local alcohol and or drug-related traffic injuries also **decreased** by nearly 17-percent (16.8%) between 2007 and 2008 (and from 2,827 to 2,352 such injuries). Such represents a second-year consecutive decline in such injuries occurring in the Greater Washington area.
- **ARRESTS...** Local arrests for either driving under the influence (DUI) or driving while intoxicated (DWI) **increased** by over four-and-a-half-percent (4.6%) between 2007 and 2008 (and from 14,976 to 15,669 such arrests). Such represents the highest level of impaired driving arrests occurring in the Greater Washington area in six years (2002:16,309 DUI/DWI arrests).

Of the Washington-metropolitan area's 310 total traffic fatalities last year, 29.7% (92) of these roadway deaths were alcohol and or drug-related. 2008 national statistics (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration or NHTSA) show that 37-percent of total U.S. vehicular fatalities were reported as alcohol / drug-related.

While WRAP and COG officials pointed to high-profile law enforcement deployments like local sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols – and the voluntary compliance gained from the same – as a principal catalyst in Greater Washington's recent downward DUI numbers, they also stressed the need to resist complacency.

“Because drunk-driving arrests are still a problem every hour in metropolitan Washington, we must look for even more effective ways to combat this preventable killer,” said David Robertson, COG's executive director.

WRAP's timing in releasing its preliminary report is in tandem with this country's most deadly time of year when it comes to drunk driving. According to NHTSA, historically, more people are killed in alcohol-related traffic crashes between Thanksgiving and New Years than during any other period of the year.

WRAP's 2009 “How Safe are Our Roads?”
preliminary report can be found as a pdf file at:

<http://www.wrap.org/highwaysafety09.pdf>

12.11.09 wrap release;
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Founded in 1982, the Washington Regional Alcohol Program is an award-winning public-private partnership working to prevent drunk driving and underage drinking. For more information, visit www.wrap.org. COG (www.mwcog.org) is the association of 19 local governments working together for a better metropolitan region.

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(WRAP's holiday free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, SoberRide, operates between 10:00 pm and 6:00 am each day during the period of December 11, 2009 through January 1, 2010. During these evening hours, Washington-metropolitan area residents ages 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may call the toll-free SoberRide phone number 1-800-200-TAXI and be afforded a no-cost [up to a \$ 50 fare], safe way home. AT&T wireless customers can call #-TAXI for the same service. See www.soberride.com for more details.)

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