

CONTACT: Kurt Gregory Erickson
President

PHONE: W. 703/893-0461
CELL. 703/625-2303

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 21, 2009

STIFFER DUI & TEEN DRINKING LAWS GO **IN EFFECT IN MARYLAND NEXT WEEK**

ANTI-UNDERAGE DRINKING GROUP REMINDS MARYLAND PARENTS OF THEIR ABILITY TO SUSPEND THEIR TEEN'S DRIVER'S LICENSE

Annapolis, MD, Sep. 21 – Four new Maryland laws going into effect next week aim to crack-down not only on those repeatedly driving impaired on Maryland's roadways but so, too, underage drinkers in the Old Line State.

Specifically and as a result of 2009 Maryland General Assembly bills signed into law in May by Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley (D), driving under the influence (DUI) and teen drinking bills going into effect on October 1, 2009:

- **mandate one-year driver's license suspensions for persons twice convicted (within five years) of either driving under the influence of alcohol or controlled dangerous substances** (Senate Bill 262);
- **outlaw the "consumption" of alcohol by those under 21 and criminalize the provision of alcohol to those under 21** (House Bill 299);
- **double the period for a subsequent Probation Before Judgment (PBJ) finding for impaired driving offenses** (House Bill 301 & Senate Bill 259);
- **and provide for fines and incarceration for persons violating a Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) imposed driver's license alcohol restriction** (House Bill 305 & Senate Bill 263).

"With repeat drunk drivers being overrepresented in fatal traffic crashes where alcohol was a factor and nearly half of Maryland's high school seniors binge drinking, these are likely lifesaving new laws," said Kurt Gregory Erickson, President of the Maryland nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), registered Maryland lobbyist and a proponent of this year's DUI and underage drinking legislation.

(more)

Next month's enacted laws were originally introduced by O'Malley in January and were borne out of the recommendations made by the Maryland General Assembly-created Task Force to Combat Driving Under the Influence of Drugs and Alcohol¹ (of which WRAP served as a gubernatorial-appointed member).

And while Maryland's newest teen drinking law was *originally* introduced in Annapolis this year calling for a six-month driver's license suspension for teens convicted of alcohol consumption or possession (something General Assembly members stripped from the bill and replaced with a *monetary* fine before sending the amended bill to Governor O'Malley), WRAP reminds parents of teens engaged in underage drinking of a seemingly little known allowance in state law which allows Maryland parents to have their children's driver's license suspended.

“While lawmakers in Annapolis this year abdicated their role in implementing meaningful driver's license sanctions for convicted underage drinkers in Maryland, parents in the state may do what the government won't which is to separate the teen drinker from the family car,” said Erickson.

Specifically, the Transportation Article (16-108) of the Annotated Code of Maryland affords the cosigner of a minor's driver's license application (most frequently a parent) to, at any time and until that minor turns 18 years of age, request that the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration suspend their teen's driver's license.²

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.³ 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.⁴ In addition, the Maryland State Department of Education's latest (2007) “Maryland Adolescent Survey” found that while more than six-out-of-ten (60.6%) of Maryland's high school seniors reported drinking alcohol in the last year, nearly half (46.9%) of these same 12th graders reported having had five or more servings of alcohol on the same occasion otherwise known as “binge drinking.”⁵

According to NHTSA figures, more than one-quarter (26%) of all traffic fatalities occurring on Maryland's roadways in 2008 were alcohol-related.⁶

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 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.

#

¹ Full report of Maryland's 'DUI Task Force' viewable online here: <http://wrap.org/pdfs/FinalTFReportsSubmitted102908.pdf>

² Source: MD Legislative Information Services, see: http://mlis.state.md.us/asp/statutes_respond.asp?article=gtr§ion=16-108&Extension=HTML

³ Source: NHTSA, see: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810985.PDF>

⁴ Source: CDC, see: <http://www.cdc.gov/MMWR/preview/mmwrhtml/00032985.htm>

⁵ Source: MD Department of Education, see: http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/NR/rdonlyres/852505C8-7FDB-4E4E-B34E-448A5E2BE8BC/18944/MAS2007FinalReport_revised111808.pdf

⁶ Source: NHTSA, see: <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811172.PDF>