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NEW LAWS TARGETING **TEEN DRINKING GO IN EFFECT IN** **VIRGINIA NEXT WEEK**

LAWS ALLOWING COURTS TO CRACK-DOWN ON UNDERAGE DRINKING EFFECTIVE JULY 1

Richmond, VA, June 23 – With recent U.S. data showing underage drinking on the rise and Virginia data showing a virtual stalling in the numbers of teens using alcohol, four new, anti-teen drinking laws are going into effect in Virginia next week.

Specifically and as a result of 2010 Virginia General Assembly legislation signed into law by Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell (R), the Commonwealth's newest underage drinking laws going into effect on July 1st include those:

- eliminating the current mandate that persons under 18 convicted of underage drinking automatically have their disposition deferred (**HB 862**, Cline);
- allowing courts to suspend both the motor vehicle and driver's license or impose a driving curfew for persons under 18 twice convicted of underage drinking (**HB 908**, Bell);
- disallowing courts from issuing restricted driver's licenses for school travel to persons under 18 convicted of either DUI or refusing a BAC test (**HB 863**, Cline);
- and limiting where alcohol legally served to those underage (families within a residence) is consumed (TO such residence) (**HB 1293**, Cleaveland).

“Virginia’s newest teen drinking laws are apt responses to both alcohol continuing to be the most commonly used substance by Virginia teens and that more than ten-percent of those injured in the Commonwealth’s drunk driving crashes are 15 to 19-year-olds,” said Kurt Gregory Erickson, President of the nonprofit and Virginia-based Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), registered Virginia lobbyist and proponent of this year’s underage drinking bills.

In March of this year, the U.S. Partnership for a Drug-Free America¹ released the findings of its 2009 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study showing alcohol use amongst American high school students increasing by 11-percent since 2008. In addition and according to Virginia’s Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services’ last released and statewide Virginia Community Youth Survey (2005), alcohol use amongst the Commonwealth’s youth has remain unchanged for the report’s last half-decade (2000 – 2005).

In addition and according to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles², over ten-percent (10.29%) of those injured in the Commonwealth’s drunk driving crashes in 2009 were 15 to 19-year-olds.

In addition to Virginia’s newest underage drinking policies, other related and new laws going into effect in Virginia next Thursday include those: establishing a new Class 1 misdemeanor penalty for school bus operators consuming or possessing alcohol (**HB 1353**); and the mandating of seatbelt use by persons under 18 in the rear seats of vehicles (as is currently required of persons under 16) (**SB 219**).

Founded in 1982, the nonprofit 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: Partnership for a Drug-Free America, see:
http://www.drugfree.org/Files/PATS_Full_Report_2009_PDF

² Source: VA Department of Motor Vehicles, see:
http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/pdf/vacrashfacts_09.pdf