

**CONTACT:** Kurt Gregory Erickson  
President

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 9, 2011

## **TOUGH NEW TEEN** **DRINKING & DRIVING LAW IN EFFECT** **IN VIRGINIA NEXT MONTH**

### ***JULY 1<sup>ST</sup> LAW MANDATES YEAR-LONG DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION*** ***AND ELEVATES CRIME FOR UNDERAGE DRINKERS WHO DRIVE***

**Richmond, VA, June 9** – Effective next month, teens convicted in Virginia of driving after consuming virtually *any* amount of alcohol will lose their driver's licenses for a year and be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

Specifically – and as a result of 2011 Virginia General Assembly legislation (HB 1407 and SB 770) signed into law this spring by Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell (R) -- a new Virginia law going into effect on July 1, 2011 doubles the current driver's license suspension period (to one year) for teens convicted of driving with virtually any amount of alcohol in their systems as well as elevates such already unlawful act to a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(Identical Virginia legislation was signed into law in 2008 however contained a 2010 sunset provision.)

***“As one-third of teens killed in traffic crashes had been drinking, this is a most welcomed strengthening of Virginia's zero-tolerance laws when it comes to drinking and driving,”*** said Kurt Gregory Erickson, President of the nonprofit and Virginia-based Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP), registered Virginia lobbyist and proponent of House Bill 1407 and Senate Bill 770.

Currently in Virginia, persons under 21 convicted of driving with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .02 -- but less than Virginia's current per se statute of .08 BAC when *all* drivers are presumed to be driving while intoxicated -- are penalized with a six-month driver's license suspension and a “fine of not more than \$ 500.”

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, a 120-pound male or female would reach a BAC of .02 after consuming just one drink in one hour.<sup>1</sup>

According to Virginia's Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services' most recent Virginia Community Youth Survey, alcohol is the "most commonly used substance" by Virginia teens citing that 76-percent of Virginia's high school seniors and 64-percent of the Commonwealth's 10<sup>th</sup> graders reported using alcohol. In addition, more than one-quarter (27.8%) of Virginia's 12<sup>th</sup> graders reported consuming five or more drinks in a row within the reporting period's past two weeks.<sup>ii</sup>

In 2010, 543 teenagers (15 to 19 years of age) were injured in alcohol-related traffic crashes on Virginia's roadways according to the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.<sup>iii</sup>

***"This completely preventable human damage translates into every 16 hours a teen being injured in an alcohol-related traffic crash in Virginia,"*** said Erickson.

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](http://www.wrap.org)**.

#

---

<sup>i</sup> [http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/alcohol/impaired\\_driving/appendix.html](http://www.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/alcohol/impaired_driving/appendix.html)

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/documents/reports/OSAS-CommunityYouthSurvey2005.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/pdf/vacrashfacts\\_10.pdf](http://www.dmv.virginia.gov/webdoc/pdf/vacrashfacts_10.pdf)