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TOUGH NEW DUI LAW NOW IN EFFECT **IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

MEASURE EFFECTIVE THIS MONTH REQUIRES IGNITION INTERLOCKS FOR ALL DUI OFFENDERS IN THE CITY

Washington, D.C., Oct. 20 – Effective this month, all persons convicted of driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol in the District of Columbia will be mandated to equip their vehicle with an in-car breathalyzer otherwise known as an ignition interlock device.

Signed into law by District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser (D) on July 25, 2016 and having quietly (and successfully) just emerged from U.S. Congressional review this month, the District's "Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Act of 2015" (B21-0335) mandates ignition interlock devices for a minimum of six months for all persons convicted of DUI in D.C. District law had previously only mandated that the city *establish* an interlock program.

"With the District of Columbia averaging a DUI arrest six hours, this new law is not only welcomed but necessary," said Kurt Gregory Erickson, President of the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program.

Data recently released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration shows that while alcohol-impaired-driving fatalities (involving a driver or motorcycle operator with a BAC of .08 g/dL or greater) increased by 3.2 percent in the U.S. in 2015, such highway deaths increased in the District by 20-percent last year.

The District's newest drunk driving law originated via Council of the District of Columbia Chairman Phil Mendelson (D), on behalf of Mayor Bowser, introducing legislation in late 2015 proposing to "help achieve the goal by the year 2024 of zero fatalities and serious injuries to travelers of the District's transportation system." Said "Vision Zero Act of 2015" (B21-0383) originally sought to require interlocks for either repeatedly convicted drunk drivers in the city or for persons convicted of DUI at higher blood alcohol concentration levels.

On December 8, 2015 and before a hearing of the Council of the District of Columbia's Committee on Transportation and the Environment, WRAP's President Kurt Erickson joined others in testifying in support of the "Vision Zero Act of 2015" but with amendment.

Specifically, WRAP supported the amendment of B21-0383 and its interlock sanctions to apply to all persons convicted of either DUI or operating a vehicle while impaired in the District of Columbia.

The sanction of ignition interlocks for all persons convicted of DUI (rather than just subgroups like “high-BAC” offenders) has yielded the lifesaving dividends of not only a 67-percent drop in DUI recidivism (U.S. Centers for Disease Control) but also a marked reduction in alcohol-impaired traffic fatalities with states like West Virginia and New Mexico posting 50 and 37-percent declines in such highway deaths in part to laws mandating interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers (WV since 2008 all-offender enactment; NM since 2005 all-offender enactment - NHTSA data).

In 2016, elements of the aforementioned “Vision Zero” legislation were not only rolled into the new “Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Amendment Act of 2016” (still B21-335) but were strengthened by Councilmember Mary M. Cheh (D) and her Committee on Transportation and the Environment to “require all offenders to enroll in the District’s (ignition interlock) Program upon a first and second conviction for driving under the influence of alcohol or a drug, driving while intoxicated, or operating a vehicle while impaired” (June 1, 2016 Committee Report). Persons otherwise ineligible to participate in the District’s proposed mandatory and all-offender interlock program would have their driver’s licenses revoked.

As advanced by the Transportation and Environment Committee and now mandated by District law, first-time DUI offenders will now be required to participate in D.C.’s interlock program for six-months and second-time offenders for one-year.

B21-335 passed the D.C. Council on a unanimous vote on June 28, 2016. The proposed new law emerged from U.S. Congressional review and became D.C. law effective October 8, 2016.

With the law’s enactment this month, the District of Columbia’s new “all offender” DUI law has the city join [28 U.S. states in requiring ignition interlocks for all persons convicted of drunk driving](#). (Maryland also enacted a similar law this month. Virginia enacted its “all offender” law in 2012.)

Founded in 1982, the nonprofit [501(c)(3)] Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) is a coalition of diverse interests using effective education, innovative programs and targeted advocacy to end alcohol-impaired driving and underage drinking in the Washington, DC metro area. Through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy, WRAP is credited with keeping the metro-Washington area’s alcohol-related traffic deaths historically 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. For more information on the District’s “Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Act of 2015” (B21-0335), visit the Council of the District of Columbia’s Legislative Information Management System web page at <http://lims.dccouncil.us/Legislation/B21-0335?FromSearchResults=true>.