



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**GOVERNOR KAINE ANNOUNCES CRACKDOWN ON DRUNK DRIVERS
TAKING THE “SCENIC WAY HOME”**
2008 Checkpoint Strikeforce Campaign Kicks Off Across Virginia

Mechanicsville, Va. – Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine today launched the *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign in Mechanicsville, Virginia -- a statewide initiative combining enforcement and education efforts to raise public awareness of drunk driving. The 2008 campaign, launches on the eve of a regional initiative targeting impaired driving on rural roadways. Virginia is represented in the initiative with more than 92 state and local law enforcement agencies participating across the state. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, over half (55-percent) of the nation’s 2006 traffic fatalities occurred on rural roads. Last year in Virginia, 51-percent of the alcohol-related fatalities occurred on rural roads, according to Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles data.

“Virginia will continue its tough stance against drunk drivers and we will not allow back road escapes for people driving under the influence,” Governor Kaine said. “We must remain vigilant to decrease these preventable traffic fatalities throughout the state.”

In 2007, there were 378 alcohol-related traffic fatalities in Virginia. State data indicates that the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities in Virginia has remained steady over recent years, a finding that is alarming and troubling to law enforcement officials across the state. In addition to this weekend’s enhanced enforcement on Virginia’s rural roadways and with Labor Day weekend – historically one of the deadliest drunk driving holiday weekends of the year – right around the corner, *Checkpoint Strikeforce* has begun a five-month, statewide campaign to reduce the incidence of drunken driving. This statewide campaign combines proactive public education and enforcement efforts in order to raise public awareness of drunk driving.

A public opinion survey of 800 Virginia drivers conducted in July 2008 for *Checkpoint Strikeforce* by the Richmond-based polling firm MWR Strategies, found that drivers continue to strongly support the use of sobriety checkpoints. Among those surveyed, the majority not only perceived drunk driving as one of most serious dangers facing drivers but also that the behavior of drunk driving is one of the most dangerous, more so even than an unprotected one-night stand, sleeping with your best friend’s significant other, sky diving or telling

off your boss. The majority of respondents also identified two lane rural highways as the most difficult to navigate under the influence and one of the most likely places to be stopped by law enforcement.

For the remainder of 2008, law enforcement agencies in Virginia will hold at least one sobriety checkpoint or saturation patrol each week throughout the region. Through the use of these law enforcement efforts, the *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign works to keep impaired drivers off the road. Deploying sobriety checkpoints and patrols when and where drunk driving is most likely to occur deters motorists from driving under the influence and arrests those who do.

“The message from law enforcement is as simple as it is clear, if you choose to drink and drive, we will catch you no matter what roadway you take,” said Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, Superintendent, Virginia State Police.

In addition to sobriety checkpoints and patrols, Virginia’s *Checkpoint Strikeforce* campaign is employing earned media and ads in combination with other statewide outreach efforts in a robust \$1,000,000 effort to remind citizens of the many dangers and consequences of impaired driving. Throughout the next several months, nearly 25,000 radio and television spots will run throughout the Commonwealth and will target the most feared result of impaired driving amongst the targeted 21-to-35-year old male audience: the killing or injuring of someone else. The campaign is supported by a grant from the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles.

Today the Virginia Highway Safety Office also launched the state's latest effort to encourage the use of designated drivers as a means of deterring impaired driving. The HERO Campaign for Designated Drivers (www.drivesmartva.org) is modeled after a New Jersey based designated driver effort stemming from the death of John Elliott, a young U.S. Naval Ensign, who, in 2000, was killed by a drunk driver. Along with the Virginia Highway Safety Office, the HERO Campaign will be partnering with Drive Smart Virginia and the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association to establish this designated driver program in establishments serving alcohol throughout the Commonwealth.

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Listen to the ads and get more information at <http://www.checkpointstrikeforce.net/educate.html>

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