



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Sen. Larson, Rep. Staskunas Bill Increases Ignition Interlock Device Use to Save Lives**

MADISON – Today State Senator Chris Larson (D-Milwaukee) and State Representative Tony Staskunas (D-West Allis) introduced legislation to strengthen Wisconsin’s drunk driving laws through increased use of ignition interlock devices (IIDs). This bill would require IIDs to be installed in vehicles of any first-time convicted drunk driver, not just repeat offenders or those with a blood alcohol content (BAC) above .15.

According to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT), alcohol-related crashes killed 238 people and injured nearly 4,000 in Wisconsin in 2009. Additionally, approximately 45 percent of all fatal traffic crashes in Wisconsin in 2009 were alcohol-related. These staggering statistics continue to keep Wisconsin ranked as one of the worst states for drunk driving offenses.

“Our current drunk driving laws do little to give Wisconsin’s drivers peace-of-mind while on the road,” said Sen. Larson. “We owe it to our family, friends, and neighbors to do what is necessary to change the culture of drinking and driving and to keep our streets safe.”

We know that taking away driver’s licenses for convicted drunk drivers does not prevent them from driving. DOT estimates for 2010 show that over 32,000 people were convicted of OWI in Wisconsin. Of these, nearly 32 percent of those convicted were repeat offenders. IIDs, on the other hand, have forced offenders to change their behavior by preventing their vehicles from starting if their BAC is above .02. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that IIDs reduce drunk driving recidivism by 67 percent.

“The statistics show that ignition interlock devices are effective at reducing drunk driving,” said Rep. Staskunas. “We will be doing a disservice to our communities if we do not start taking full advantage of this life-saving technology.”

The 2009-2010 Legislature expanded the use of IIDs to first-time offenders with a BAC of .15 or higher and all repeat offenders. Unfortunately, over the past year we have learned of cases around the state where first-time OWI offenders successfully plea bargain their BAC level below .15 in an effort to avoid the installation of IIDs.

This recently introduced legislation is another step in the right direction towards making our streets safer for Wisconsinites by requiring that all first-time convicted drunk drivers install an IID in their vehicle.

“We are now in the holiday season, which tends to be one of the most dangerous times of the year for alcohol-related driving offenses,” said Sen. Larson. “Our holiday season should be a time of celebration with family and friends, not tarnished by a tragedy resulting from drunk driving.”

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