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For Immediate Release

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Senator Carpenter Urges Senate Majority Leader to Bring Drunken Driving Bills for a Vote in the State Senate

Madison – Today State Senator Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) sent the following letter to Senate Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald in response to reports he will not bring up bills passed by the Assembly to crack down on drunken driving this session.

The end of this legislative session is rapidly approaching, and protecting the health and safety of our friends and families on the road should be a priority. I was disappointed to see reported in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel that you will not be considering bringing up for a vote in the Senate the bills passed by the Assembly cracking down on drunken driving in Wisconsin.

The State Assembly has passed very important drunken driving laws this session – bills that would make a second-offense drunken-driving offense a misdemeanor in all cases; make a fourth-time offense a felony in all cases; require all those charged with first-offense drunken driving to personally appear in court; and prohibit people required to install ignition interlock devices on their cars from driving any vehicle without it.

These bills passed with overwhelmingly majorities in the Assembly: AB 180 passed 95-1; AB 68 passed 88-7; AB 67 and AB 467 passed on voice votes. I believe that the Senate would express similar bi-partisan support. As you may know, I have cosponsored most of these bills and in the case of AB 180, voted in committee to pass the bill.

It is time to get serious with laws to keep offenders – especially repeat offenders – off the road now. The fiscal notes on these bills are not unduly onerous, and my constituents have, over the years, overwhelmingly stated that they are willing to bear such costs for increasing the penalties.

I support the topic you have raised about funding drunken driving courts. However, this issue should not be used as an excuse to ignore available legislation to pass and protect the health and safety of our friends and families. We can do both.

Please reconsider adding the Assembly's bills cracking down drunken driving to the Senate's calendar for January 2014.

Senator Carpenter's press releases are available for review at
<http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/sen03/news>

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