

WISCONSIN SENATE REPUBLICANS

ISSUE BRIEFS FOR THE 2015-16 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

PUBLIC SAFETY: DRUNK DRIVING

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HISTORY

We have made dramatic strides in the last decade towards reducing the impact of drunk driving on our state. Crashes, injuries and fatalities related to alcohol have been cut in half, and more than two-thirds of drivers who receive a first OWI never reoffend. For those who do not have a substance abuse problem, the high societal and financial costs associated with the first offense are nearly always an adequate deterrent to getting behind the wheel while intoxicated. Alongside stiff penalties, we will continue to focus on making treatment available for those who need it to produce a lasting and meaningful impact on drunk driving in Wisconsin.

- There were more than 24,000 convictions for drunken driving offenses in Wisconsin in 2014.
- Alcohol-related crashes killed 162 people in Wisconsin and injured nearly 2,700 in 2014.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

2015 WI ACT 55 (SB 21): Included in the Biennial Budget was the launch of the 5-county pilot of a 24/7 Sobriety Program. Mirrored after a successful version implemented in Winnebago County in 2011, the program gives the state another new tool to combat alcohol and drug abuse. Participants receive twice daily testing for alcohol use with the threat of immediate sanctions, an approach proven to reduce recidivism in participants.

2015 WI ACT 371 (SB 455): Increases penalties for multiple offenders and makes any fourth offense a felony, aligning Wisconsin's laws with those of other states.

2015 WI ACT 388 (AB 657): Increases funding for state Treatment and Diversion (TAD) programs by \$2 million each year. Unlike simply hiking monetary penalties and jail time, the TAD program targets our drunk driving problem at its root, by treating alcohol and drug addiction to reduce the number of impaired drivers on Wisconsin's roads. According to a four year study by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, participants in state TAD programs were nine times less likely to return to prison than other offenders. That translates to an average savings of \$1.93 for every dollar invested in alternative treatment programs.