

Legislature considers toughening penalties for drunken driving

Even after only one can of beer, drivers may want to think twice before getting behind the wheel under a new set of bills proposed in the Michigan Legislature.

Last week, the state Senate passed an 11-bill package that would stiffen penalties against drunk drivers, especially those with suspended or revoked licenses. The bill has been forwarded to the House of Representatives for further consideration, said Sen. Michael Bouchard (R-Birmingham).

"I really don't expect the House will have any problems with the package," Bouchard said. "We have the support of Governor Engler and Secretary of State (Candice) Miller. With them pushing, we hope to get everything moving fairly quickly."

Bouchard was the lead sponsor of three of the bills in the package which includes:

- increasing the penalties for bodily injury caused by operation of a motor vehicle while under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol.

- increasing penalties for repeat offenders, including vehicle forfeiture for fourth-time offenders.

- allowing courts to order convicted drunk drivers to pay child support to the victim's offspring.

- creating a separate offense and penalties for drinking and driving with minor-children in the vehicle.

"These are tough measures with two simple purposes," Bouchard said. "People should think twice before taking the wheel under the influence of alcohol. Failing that, we need to prosecute them before they kill someone."

At a press conference Monday at Troy City Hall, Bouchard also announced a proposed bill, which would allow preliminary breath analysis tests to be admitted as evidence in court.

Until now, results of PBTs

have not been admissible in drunk driving cases unless submitted by the defense, Bouchard said.

"We need to stop those who intentionally and willfully get behind the wheel under the influence of alcohol," said Bouchard, a former police officer. "Driving and killing under the influence of alcohol is a blight on our society and our laws should reflect the heinousness of these crimes. There is no reason to prevent law enforcement officials and prosecutors from using them in court."

Standard road tests, such as walking on the white line and reciting the alphabet, and blood alcohol tests are all admissible in court.

Troy resident David Easterbrook, whose teenage daughter, Ashley, was killed by a drunk driver last June, said some blood alcohol tests aren't taken until up to 11 hours after being arrested, allowing time for the alcohol to leave the system.

"Without allowing PBTs to be admissible, we are preventing all the facts from being presented," Easterbrook said. "I'm obviously in favor of anything that will help keep the streets safe for our children, families and loved ones."



Michael Bouchard

S.B. 1029 would not effect the sentence but enhance the process for conviction, Easterbrook added.

Bouchard's law enforcement background has enabled him to see first hand the devastating effects of drunk driving, said Capt. Michael McCabe of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department.

"Sen. Bouchard has been on the scene of fatal accidents in which drunk drivers killed innocent people," McCabe said. "Some people feel sorry for drunk drivers but he understands that those who drink and drive are criminals, not victims."

OAKLAND JOURNAL

Oakland Journal is a roundup of Oakland County news and notes collected from government, school, civic, community and neighborhood sources. Please write: Oakland Journal, c/o Oakland County editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (248) 644-1314.

SECOND HAND SALE

Mom's Second Hand Sale, sponsored by the Farmington Area Community Women, will be held from 9 a.m. to noon, Saturday, April 4 at the Farmington Hills Activity Center located at 11 Mile Road between Middlebelt and Inskert. Children's clothes, toys, maternity items and much more will be available. There is a \$1 admission fee.

JEWISH SINGLES MISSION

Singles ages 25-40 are invited to join an informational meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, April 6 at Moosejaw Mountaineering, 34288 Woodward, Birmingham. For the 1998 United Jewish Appeal Summer Singles Mission to Israel. The trip, with others from throughout the U.S. from July 8-19, includes parties, jeep rides in the Golan, tubing down the Jordan, a Shabbos mission or the meeting, call Marc Burke of the federation at (248) 203-1458.

QUILT CELEBRATION

The Oakland County Quilt Guild

at the Western Wall and visits to religious and historic sites. For details about the presents it's 1998 Quilt Celebration. A quilt exhibit and contest will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Friday, April 17 at Lutheran High School Northwest, located on Livernois, south of M-59. A merchants mall, refreshments, workshops and lectures will also be featured. Admission is \$5.

FREE WOOD CHIPS

Free wood chips for yard beautification projects will be available for pick-up from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on April 26, May 23, June 27, July 25, Aug. 29, Sept. 26 and Oct. 31 at the Orion Oaks County Park. Residents must bring their own shovels, wheelbarrows and buckets and can enter from the Clarkston Road entrance. For more information, call (248) 858-0906 or 1-888-OC PARKS.

USED COSTUME SALE

Hundreds of period costumes, modern and vintage clothes, fabrics and accessories will be available at Meadow Brook Theatre's costume sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 2. Prices range from 50 cents to \$50. The theatre is located on the campus of Oakland University near the corner of Squirrel and Walton Blvd.

SENIOR VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The Oakland County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program

(RSVP) seeks volunteers 55 years and older to become involved with community agencies that need assistance. Opportunities are available at schools, hospitals, libraries, human service agencies and cultural institutions throughout Oakland County. Benefits include supplemental accident and liability insurance, mileage reimbursement and the chance to make a difference. For more information, call Kimberly Thomas at (248) 559-1147.

HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS

Heartland Hospice in Southfield is looking for volunteers to provide services to terminally ill patients and their families. Tasks include home visits, phone calls, errands, companionship and general office work. Those interested will receive training in areas of death and grief, communication skills, care and comfort measures, stress management and understanding the disease process. To learn more or volunteer for this rewarding experience, call Volunteer Coordinator Kim Davids at (248) 948-1019.

PHOTO EXHIBIT HOSTS NEEDED

Host the Oakland County Parks photo exhibit and bring the excitement and natural beauty of 11 county parks to businesses, community centers, schools and other locations. For more information or to reserve the photo exhibit, call (248) 858-1086.

Keep up with your friends and neighbors — read The Eccentric



It's an annual tradition.
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