

ZERO TOLERANCE

Tough Penalties for Underage Drinking & Driving



Provided by
Your State Senator

Attention Teenagers and Young People Under 21

As your state senator, I'd like to provide you with some information on a tough state law that is aimed at cracking down on the deadly combination of teen drinking and driving.

Traffic accidents are the number one cause of death for teenagers in the United States today, and all too often alcohol is involved. The problem is just as serious here in Pennsylvania.

Seeking to prevent more young people from becoming statistics, the Pennsylvania General Assembly passed a "Zero Tolerance Law."

This law makes it illegal for people under the age of 21 to drive with any measurable amount of alcohol in their blood. It allows a police officer to obtain a chemical (breath, blood or urine) test from a driver under the age of 21 if the officer has probable cause to believe that the driver has been drinking.

Those drivers who test positive for any amount of alcohol above .02 percent will be charged under the existing drunk driving law. They could face penalties such as license suspension, incarceration, fines, higher insurance premiums, drug and alcohol evaluation, mandatory treatment and alcohol education.

These penalties are much harsher than those previously imposed for underage drinking and are intended to send a message that Pennsylvania will not tolerate underage drinking and driving.

This brochure will provide you with very important information about Pennsylvania's Zero Tolerance Law. I hope that you will find it informative and take it seriously.

Be safe,

Your State Senator

5 Important Things to Remember About Alcohol & Underage Drinking

- Alcohol can damage your liver, stomach, heart and brain and can lead to addiction.
- Because most people under 21 are still growing and developing, alcohol can have an even more serious impact.
- Alcohol affects coordination, concentration, reflexes and judgment. This can be a deadly combination for an experienced driver.
- Peer pressure is no reason to engage in underage drinking. Taking responsibility for your own actions is part of the maturing process.
- There are many alternatives to drinking, such as activities you may already enjoy or are interested in exploring – sports, recreation, the arts, spirituality, hobbies, a job.

What Does Pennsylvania Law Say About Underage Drinking?

It is illegal in Pennsylvania for persons under the age of 21 to attempt to purchase, consume, possess or transport any alcohol, liquor, malt or brewed beverages. Drivers under age 21 face tough penalties under Pennsylvania's Zero Tolerance Law. The law stipulates that minors who have any measurable alcohol in their system may be charged with drunk driving.

What Are the Guidelines of the Zero Tolerance Law?

If you are under 21, it is illegal to drive with any measurable alcohol in your blood. The Zero Tolerance Law reduced the Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) required to charge minors (under age 21) with Driving Under the Influence (DUI) from .08 percent to .02 percent.

Why Did the Legislature Pass This Law?

Traffic crashes are the number one cause of death for teenagers in the United States. Statistics have shown that alcohol is a contributing factor in many deaths of drivers between the

ages of 16 and 20. These alarming statistics prompted state legislators to be tougher on young drivers who drink, and to specify that for those under 21, even one drink is one too many.

Is Pennsylvania the Only State with a Zero Tolerance Law?

No! It is illegal in every state for persons under the age of 21 to purchase and publicly possess alcohol beverages. A Zero Tolerance Law makes it illegal for those under the age of 21 to drive with any measurable amount of alcohol in their blood. Currently, every state and the District of Columbia have set a BAC limit of .02 percent or lower for drivers under age 21.

How Can You Fight Against Underage Drinking and Driving?

Communities, schools and individuals should encourage police to promote and enforce Zero Tolerance Laws for youth. Police are likely to emphasize their community's priorities. Therefore, you should let them know that the community supports laws to prevent underage drinking and driving and supports strict enforcement of these laws. Most important, don't drink if you are under 21. It's not worth the consequences.

Hotline to Report Underage Drinking

You can help to prevent underage drinking before it starts – and possibly prevent a tragedy – by reporting it to the Pennsylvania State Police.

If you know of an underage drinking party that is planned or in progress, call toll-free 888-UNDER-21.

You can also report establishments that are selling or serving alcohol to those under 21 and people who are manufacturing and selling false identification.

You may save a life – possibly of someone you know and love!



The message you need to remember is this:
“If you use – you lose.”

The Zero Tolerance Law establishes serious consequences for those under 21 who drive with a measurable amount of alcohol in their blood. Those who break the law will be charged with driving under the influence and face stiff penalties, including:

- Up to one year's driver's license suspension;
- A drug and alcohol evaluation;
- Fines (up to \$500 for a first offense), court costs and restitution;
- Participation in a state-approved Alcohol Highway Safety Program if the court orders it;
- An automatic one-year suspension of driving privileges for anyone who refuses to be tested for DUI.

The hassles don't end there. Consider the following:

- DUI fines, attorney's fees and court costs are very expensive;
- Your car insurance premiums will go up or your car insurance could even be canceled;
- You could lose your job if it involves driving a commercial vehicle;

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF ZERO TOLERANCE?

- Your parents and friends probably won't trust you as much as they did before;
- Your irresponsible behavior could result in serious injury or death, possibly of a close friend or a family member.

Don't think that these things could only happen to someone else, because if you break the law, they could easily happen to you!

Also keep these things in mind:

- Adults who furnish alcohol to minors face stiff fines and penalties;
- It is illegal for drivers and their passengers to consume or possess open containers of alcohol on state roadways;
- It is illegal to lie about your age to obtain alcohol;
- It is illegal for anyone to make, sell or even carry a false identification card;
- Most schools have strict policies against alcohol and drug possession, including suspension and a mandatory evaluation if these policies are violated.

You may think you can get away with underage drinking, but the facts and the consequences say otherwise! And you could pay the price for a very long time afterward.

Your best bet? Don't even try it.