

Alaska State Legislature

House of Representatives



Representative Harry Crawford -- District 21

“Alcohol can be kept from offenders”

By REP. HARRY CRAWFORD AND BERNADETTE BRADLEY

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In the past decade, the Alaska Legislature has taken an aggressive approach to combat drunken driving by increasing fines and sentences. Despite some of the toughest laws in the nation, Alaskans continue to be injured or killed in accidents fueled by alcohol.

Many convicted of drunken driving go on to commit the crime again. Statistics show that a third of the people arrested for drunken driving are repeat offenders.

These repeat offenders are 40 percent more likely to be involved in a fatal crash. Alaska has increased punishment for repeat offenders, but those penalties only kick in after the crime has been committed and someone has possibly been injured or killed.

Repeat offenders are often ordered not to consume alcohol as part of a sentence or as a condition of probation or parole. Yet there is currently no way for restaurants, nightclubs, bars and liquor stores to know if an individual has been court-ordered not to drink. There is nothing to stop him from going to the store and buying alcohol.

HB 14 would change that. If a convicted drunken driver were court-ordered not to drink for a period of time, a mark would be placed on his or her driver's license or state ID card for the duration of the order. That mark would alert businesses that sell alcohol that the individual was prohibited from drinking. If a business caught a person with a marked license attempting to illegally purchase alcohol, then the business could pursue a \$1,000 penalty, similar to the penalty awarded if a minor is caught attempting to purchase illegally.

Some people confuse HB 14 with other, more controversial approaches. It isn't a mandatory ID law. The laws regarding which customers are required to show ID are not changed by this legislation. It doesn't mean your grandmother would have to start showing ID in order to buy a bottle of wine for Sunday dinner. Checking ID remains voluntary, but there is a \$1,000 incentive through the civil

penalty for liquor licensees to make sure their customers aren't under court order not to drink.

HB 14 also doesn't require bars, restaurants or liquor stores to buy any special equipment, like electronic scanners for IDs. Some stores have started using scanning technology, but most have not. The mark on the license will be a physical display visible to the naked eye. The information will also be on the card electronically for those businesses that utilize scanning technology. But there won't be any added cost for doing business in Alaska.

This legislation is supported by the Anchorage Cabaret, Hotel and Restaurant Retailer association. Anchorage CHARR is a trade organization that represents local restaurants, hotels, bars, liquor stores and other hospitality-related businesses.

The 2007 strategic plan of Anchorage CHARR includes efforts to continue to reduce drunken-driving statistics. In May of 2005, Anchorage CHARR initiated the successful "Off the Road" program, which provides customers with a free, safe way of getting home if they have had too much to drink. Anchorage CHARR encourages its members to help customers make the right choice, to drink responsibly and drive responsibly. HB 14 is a step in the right direction to deter future repeat offenders.

Too many Alaskan lives have been destroyed by drunken driving. It's a crime that affects the whole community. By trying new ways to stop problem drinkers from buying alcohol, we can prevent drunken-driving deaths and injuries from happening. Working together, we can lead the way to protecting Alaska families.

Rep. Harry Crawford is the sponsor of HB 14 and represents East Anchorage in the Alaska State Legislature. Bernadette Bradley is the owner of the Bradley House in Anchorage and the president of Anchorage CHARR.