



# CONNECTICUT POLICE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION

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## Testimony to the Judiciary Committee

April 2, 2007

Chiefs Anthony Salvatore & James Strillacci, Connecticut Police Chiefs Association

We support **SB #1348, AA Strengthening Drunk Driving Enforcement**. Its purpose is to implement the recommendations of a working group convened by then-Lt. Governor Sullivan after the 2006 session. These include:

- Lowering thresholds for “elevated blood alcohol content” in commercial-vehicle drivers (.04%) and drivers under 21 (.02%)—reasonable provisions for special classes of drivers;
- Simplifying the testing procedure by reducing the wait between breath tests from 30 to 10 minutes and eliminating the “relation back” argument;
- Raising penalties;
- Allowing vehicle forfeiture for manslaughter and assault second with a vehicle, or for persistent offenders;
- Mandating completion—not just participation—of the alcohol education program for second and subsequent convictions;
- Allowing access to driver’s medical records in more circumstances, which would prevent drunk drivers from using a trip to the hospital to duck responsibility;
- Requiring DMV to notify police timely of error in DUI forms or documents, which would allow submission of complete and correct documents in time for hearings;
- Simplifying the administrative “per se” hearings by restricting the inquiry to documentary evidence and limiting the scope to whether the police officer arrested the subject, whether the subject refused or failed the test, and whether the suspect was driving. This would eliminate current “mini-trials” by which many drunk drivers escape suspension;
- Allowing the court to order the use—not just the installation—of ignition interlock devices;
- Making the presence of an open container a rebuttable presumption of drinking while driving, which would prevent a driver from dodging a citation by handing off his bottle to a passenger.

The current DUI laws take great pains to protect innocent drivers from conviction, and have the effect of shielding many guilty ones from the consequences of their actions. By snipping yards of red tape from current law, this bill far better protect the public from the danger of drunks at the wheel. Connecticut’s police chiefs are pleased to support this bill.

**SB #1237** would raise the penalty for personal-injury hit-an-run cases. **SB #1433** would allow alcohol education for commercial operators arrested for DUI in non-commercial vehicles. **HB #6822** would require installation of ignition interlock devices after a third DUI conviction. Though not as beneficial as **#1348**, each of these proposals has merit.