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**Testimony by Representative Tom Reynolds**  
**Transportation Committee**  
**March 4, 2009**

**S.B. 152, AN ACT PROHIBITING OPEN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTAINERS IN MOTOR VEHICLES**

**S.B. 153, AN ACT CONCERNING ADMINISTRATIVE PER SE VIOLATIONS AND PROCEDURES**

Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero, and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee, I am pleased to testify in support of two drunk driving bills before you today.

**NATIONAL TRENDS**

For many years, there was much progress towards reducing drunk driving deaths in Connecticut and across the nation. From 1980 and into the 1990's alcohol-related automobile accidents declined considerably across the country, as a result of tougher drunk driving laws, more aggressive enforcement, and education, prevention and advocacy by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Unfortunately, this progress has come to a screeching halt. Rates of drunk driving deaths have stagnated nationally and increased in Connecticut.

Alcohol-related traffic deaths in our nation are at their highest level ever since 1992. In 2006, an estimated 17,602 people died in alcohol-related traffic crashes in the U.S.—an average of one every 30 minutes. Impaired driving is the most frequently committed violent crime in our nation.

In 2002, surveys estimate that Americans took over 159 million alcohol-impaired driving trips, compared with only 116 million in 1997. Approximately 1.4 million drivers were arrested in 2004 for driving under the influence of alcohol or narcotics. This is an arrest

## ADMINISTRATIVE PER SE

S.B. 153 makes several changes to strengthen Connecticut's criminal and administrative per se laws. A police officer who has arrested someone for DUI can request the person to submit to a blood, breath, or urine test. If the person refuses to take the test or takes the test and the results reveal an elevated blood alcohol content, the driver is subject to an administrative license suspension or "administrative *per se*." This suspension operates independently of the procedures for prosecuting the accused person on the criminal charge.

The bill makes various changes in the statutes, including redefining "elevated blood alcohol content" for commercial motor vehicle operators, changing the minimum time between chemical tests conducted by the police, and providing more flexibility on the part of the DMV Commissioner to grant continuances in per se hearings.

## CONCLUSION

We are experiencing a growing sense of complacency about drunk driving among public policy makers and the general public. This complacency carries deadly consequences for our state, yet this public health and safety crisis continues with no response.

These bills are reasonable and long overdue. They are strategically focused. They are models proven effective in other states, and there are no material fiscal impacts. Thank you for your consideration of these important bills. The adoption of these bills is the next major step Connecticut must take to enhance its arsenal of drunk driving laws.

Every drunk driving death is a preventable crime. The time for complacency is over. The time for legislative and gubernatorial leadership is now.