



Office of The Attorney General
State of Connecticut

*TESTIMONY OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
BEFORE THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MARCH 4, 2009*

I appreciate the opportunity to support Senate Bill 1054, An Act Prohibiting Open Containers of Alcohol in Motor Vehicles and Senate Bill 152, An Act Prohibiting Open Containers of Alcohol in Motor Vehicles.

Both legislative proposals ban the possession of open containers of alcoholic beverages in motor vehicles while on state highways and local roads. The proposals differ slightly in addressing some necessary and appropriate exemptions to the ban -- which includes limousines and recreation vehicles.

Open container laws reduce motor vehicle fatalities by more than five percent. Some 37 states have adopted an open container prohibition. Under federal law, if a state fails to enact a statute prohibiting open containers of alcohol that meets certain federal criteria, some of its highway construction funds are required to be used for anti-drunk driving programs.

Neither Senate Bill 1054 nor Senate Bill 152 complies with the exacting federal requirements but they will send the clear, unequivocal message that it is illegal to drive while passengers pass around open containers of alcohol. Importantly, the state does not lose any federal funding but rather will continue to use some of its federal highway construction funds for drunk driving education programs which are critical to the dissemination of drunk driving dangers especially to teens.

I urge the committee's favorable consideration of legislation to ban the possession of open containers in motor vehicles.