



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Hugh T. Farley

Farley, Tedisco, McLaughlin Join Families, Advocates and Stop DWI Coordinators to Take Drunk, Dangerous Drivers Off the Highways

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State Senator Hugh T. Farley (R, C, I – Schenectady), Assemblyman Jim Tedisco (R,C,I-Schenectady-Saratoga) and Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin (R,C-Melrose) joined families, advocates and Stop DWI Coordinators in advance of the busy Memorial Day travel weekend, to urge safe driving this summer and call for tougher laws to get repeat drunk and dangerous drivers off the roads.

Tedisco, Farley and McLaughlin are calling for new legislation supported by Stop DWI Coordinators that would direct the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to implement regulations to permanently terminate driver's license privileges for serial drunk and dangerous drivers.

Last month, Tedisco wrote Governor Cuomo and DMV Commissioner Barbara Fiala asking that the Administration explore implementing this policy through executive authority.

In February, Tedisco and Farley introduced "3-Strikes and You're Out" legislation (A.8934A/S.6496) to permanently terminate all driving privileges of an individual convicted of a combination of three or more of the following: a conviction for DWI/DUI; actions causing an accident where there is serious personal injury to another and the person who hit them is at fault; or vehicular manslaughter.

Currently, there is no provision in state law that permanently terminates driving privileges for those who are chronic drunk, drugged and/or dangerous drivers.

“Too many families have lost loved ones because our state government continues to enable serial drunk and dangerous drivers to get their licenses back so they can once again get behind the wheel and turn a vehicle into a two-ton killing machine. Our laws are antiquated and need to be reformed because these individuals keep getting back on the road with a driver’s license after they’ve demonstrated time after time they can’t be trusted to drive responsibly,” said Tedisco, former Minority Leader and current Assistant Minority Whip.

“Far too often, we have seen tragedies involving drunk or irresponsible drivers who have had their licenses suspended or revoked on multiple occasions,” said Farley. “The Senate has advanced a number of measures to crack down on drunk drivers, including passing a proposal by Senator Marty Golden of Brooklyn to target chronic violators. I am sponsoring an alternative approach with Assemblyman Tedisco that would ensure that a permanent revocation really is permanent. Drivers must be aware that there will be serious consequences for their repeated violations.”

“As a father and a husband, I know we must take every step possible toward keeping repeat drunk drivers off of our streets and away from our families,” said McLaughlin. “Anyone who shows a blatant disregard for public safety and law and order must lose their right to the road. Drunk driving destroys families and claims lives, and this legislation will help prevent the kinds of tragedies that have plagued New York families for so long.”

“I commend this effort to prevent the tragedies that can and all too often do occur when a person decides to drive drunk. As we have seen firsthand in Rensselaer County some DWI offenders fortunate enough to not harm themselves or someone else take the lessons learned to heart and make the right choices going forward. The others targeted by this legislation continue to put others’ lives at risk by driving drunk again and again and stronger laws are needed to take them off our streets,” said Rensselaer County Executive Kathleen M. Jimino.

“Losing my mother-in-law, my friend, Charlotte, was devastating, yet it motivated me to change the rules of our state. No family should have to suffer for the reckless actions of irresponsible drivers. I do not want any individual or family to feel the pain and sadness that my family has felt. We are making positive strides in New York to crack down on serial drunk and dangerous drivers and with the passage of Charlotte's Law, we will keep them off our streets,” said Dr. Linda Rozell-Shannon, former Senior Highway Safety Analyst with the DMV for over 30 years. In this

position Rozell-Shannon worked on numerous legislative initiatives and therefore became familiar with the Vehicle and Traffic Law. When her former mother-in-law, Charlotte Gallo, was killed walking in a pedestrian crossing by a serial dangerous driver. Rozell-Shannon crafted Charlotte's Law with Assemblyman Tedisco and Senator Farley in order to terminate drivers' license privileges for repeat dangerous drivers.

"As the father of a child killed by a drunk driver, and as a STOP-DWI victims' advocate for the past 14 years, I've been repeatedly shocked and dismayed by the recidivist tendencies of many convicted drunken drivers. Assemblyman Tedisco's and Senator Farley's bill addresses the dangers imposed on all of us by these repeat offenders in a fair and definitive manner," said Dean Bodnar, a Troy City Councilman, who lost his daughter, Allison to a drunk driver.

"The loss of a loved one to an intoxicated driver, or as I call them 'HIGHWAY TERRORISTS' is beyond devastation one lives the remainder of their lives in frustration, doubt on how to continue and the loss of a lot of so called friends. We tend to pull ourselves up and start all over with many bumps and groans. I feel that I am the most interesting man, but I don't say 'Stay Thirsty, my friends.' I say 'STAY SOBER when you drive, my friends!" said Bill Dikant of Schodack, who in 1977 lost his wife, Barbara, son Michael, and daughter, Karen, to a drunk driver, and saw another son, Marc, injured.

"On November 8, 2009, a hurricane crashed into our family in the form of a drunk driver. Here, 2 and a half years later, the winds continue to blow. Drunk driving kills, maims and cripples. Drunk driving takes lives and assaults lives and changes lives forever. My husband, Stephen, and daughter, Hannah, survived their near fatal head on collision with a drunk driver in a truck going 70 mph on the wrong side of the road. But their catastrophic injuries continue to impact them. Life will never be the same for these victims of one man's terrible choice," said Loriann Smith of East Greenbush.

"Addiction to drugs and alcohol is a difficult illness to overcome and those that suffer from it deserve help but our concern and compassion for them can't override our obligation to keep chronic drunk and dangerous drivers off our highways and protect innocent, law-abiding citizens and their families," said Tedisco.