



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senate Passes Bill to Strengthen Penalties for Wrong-Way and Reckless Drivers

DEAN G. SKELOS March 13, 2013

The New York State Senate today passed legislation to create felony charges for wrong-way and other reckless drivers. The bill (S752), sponsored by Senator Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr. (R-Merrick), is in response to the significant number of recent vehicle crashes – often fatal - that involve individuals who knowingly or under the influence of alcohol or drugs drove the wrong way on highways and other roads.

“Tragedies have occurred throughout the state because individuals took irresponsible risks before or while driving,” Senate Republican Leader Dean G. Skelos said. “Senator Fuschillo’s bill recognizes the seriousness of the actions of drivers who intentionally drive recklessly and strengthens the penalties accordingly.”

At least 33 wrong-way driving crashes and arrests occurred on Long Island alone since November 15, 2010, when off-duty NYPD Officer Andre Menzies was killed by a drunk driver who drove the wrong-way on the Northern State Parkway. A recent crash in Greene County on the New York State Thruway on February 22, 2013, caused by a wrong-way driver resulted

in that driver and a passenger in an oncoming vehicle being killed, and the other driver and four-month-old infant suffering injuries.

The bill would establish a new crime of aggravated reckless driving and makes it a class E felony, punishable by a prison sentence of up to four years. The crime would apply to:

- Drivers who drive the wrong way, against the flow of traffic, either knowingly or because they are intoxicated;
- Drivers who drive more than 30 miles-an-hour over the speed limit while intoxicated or impaired; or
- Drivers who drive more than 30 miles-an-hour over the speed limit while racing, pursuing other vehicles, or excessively weaving in and out of traffic.

In addition, the legislation would raise the penalty for reckless driving to a class A misdemeanor, punishable by a prison sentence of up to one year. Reckless driving is currently an unclassified misdemeanor and carries a maximum prison sentence of up to 30 days.

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.

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