



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

New York State Senate Passes Vince's Law

JOHN A. DEFRANCISCO May 6, 2013

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In an effort to keep serial drunk drivers off the road, the New York State Senate today passed “Vince’s Law”, which would establish a stronger penalty for multiple DWI convictions.

The bill (S.4267), sponsored by Senator John DeFrancisco (R-C-I,Syracuse) creates a new Class C felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison, if a driver is convicted of three or more DWIs in a 25-year period. Currently, the law for multiple DWIs only includes offenses committed over a 10-year period. The bill is named for Vincent Russo, an elderly Onondaga County man who was killed in 2011 by a drunk driver who was intoxicated behind the wheel, despite the driver having five DWI-related convictions, including four in the previous 17 years before the accident that killed Mr. Russo.

“Vincent Russo was killed by a drunk driver on his way to Sunday morning mass,” said Senator DeFrancisco. “The driver, Michael Iannettoni, whose blood alcohol content was four times the legal limit, was free awaiting sentencing for a fifth DWI violation. It is a complete outrage that Iannettoni was not behind bars, and that his sixth DWI offense resulted in a tragedy that should have been avoided. Hopefully, this legislation will be passed in both houses to try to prevent future tragedies of this nature.”

“Under current law, judges and district attorneys have a great deal of leeway in imposing sentences on people convicted of DWI,” Senator DeFrancisco said. “Driving While Intoxicated is a serious offense and the penalties for these violations should reflect that. This bill would address repeat drunk drivers by requiring them to face increased penalties, including mandatory jail time.”

The bill has been sent to the Assembly.