



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins Announces Legislation to Strengthen Penalties for Drivers Who Kill or Injure Someone While Driving WITH a Suspended or Revoked License

JACK M. MARTINS April 2, 2015

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Senator Jack M. Martins (R-7th Senate District) today announced new legislation he is sponsoring to strengthen penalties for individuals who kill or injure someone while driving with a suspended or revoked license.

Senator Martins joined with Acting Nassau County District Attorney Madeline Singas, with whom he is working on the legislation; Assemblymembers Todd Kaminsky (D-20th Assembly District) and Dave McDonough (R-14th Assembly District), who will be sponsoring the legislation with him; and the family of Zachary Ranftle, a 12 year old boy who was killed last December by an alleged suspended driver, in announcing the legislation.

"Driving is a privilege, not a right. Cars become weapons when bad drivers are behind the wheel. That someone whose driving privileges were taken away can go on the road illegally, kill or injure someone, and only face a misdemeanor charge is unacceptable. Law enforcement must be able to bring felony charges against unlicensed drivers who kill or injure others. As the Senate sponsor of this legislation, I look forward to working with Acting District Attorney Singas and my colleagues in the Legislature to hold these drivers accountable, take them off the roads, and put them behind bars where they belong," said Senator Martins.

The legislation Senator Martins is sponsoring would create felony charges for individuals who drive with a suspended or revoked license. These drivers would face up to four years in prison if they seriously injure someone and up to seven years in prison if they take someone's life.

Currently, people driving with suspended or revoked licenses who kill or injure someone face only misdemeanor charges carrying a maximum sentence of 180 days in jail.

"Today we say, 'enough.' Innocent people should not have to live in fear of suspended or revoked drivers who should not be on the road. I call upon the legislature to recognize that a suspended or revoked driver who seriously injures or kills should be charged with a felony – not the same misdemeanor charge the driver would have received if they had just been stopped by a police officer," said Acting DA Singas. "I want to thank Senator Martins,

Assemblyman Kaminsky and Assemblyman McDonough for their swift, strong and bipartisan support of these proposals. I look forward to working with them and this bill, and many other public safety issues, in the future.”

The legislation comes in response to several recent incidents on Long Island where unlicensed drivers caused tragedies. Last December, 12 year old Zachary Ranftle was killed in Valley Stream by a driver alleged to have been driving with a suspended license. Last month, a driver with a suspended license seriously injured an innocent bystander when he crashed into a Farmingdale restaurant after allegedly fleeing the scene of an accident.