



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Testimony Before The Assembly Committees On Codes And Transportation Regarding Efforts To Prevent Deaths Caused By Reckless Or Negligent Drivers on February 26, 2004

LIZ KRUEGER July 12, 2010

Good morning. My name is Liz Krueger, and I am the State Senator for the 26th District, which includes the East Side and Midtown of Manhattan. I am here to testify in support of A7311, which would establish penalties for driving while impaired by fatigue. Such legislation will help address the dangers presented by drivers who endanger other motorists and pedestrians by driving while impaired.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), tired drivers cause 56,000 accidents annually, and a Salem Hospital study places the number at over 100,000 accidents per year. NHTSA estimates these accidents result in at least 40,000 injuries and 1500 deaths each year. Unfortunately, few people realize the dangers of driving while fatigued. A.7311 will save lives both by getting fatigued drivers off the road, and by highlighting the dangers they cause, thereby encouraging people to avoid driving when they are tired.

The legislation is an important step in changing the way we think about driving. It mirrors the extremely successful efforts to reduce drunk driving through increased penalties and education efforts. Driving while fatigued is just as dangerous as driving while drunk. According to an Australian study, being awake for 24 hours produces an impairment equivalent to a .1 percent blood alcohol level, well over the .08 percent level that constitutes legal intoxication. Many other factors can also contribute to fatigue while driving, and it is essential that drivers recognize these dangers and stop driving when they are fatigued.

In 2003 New Jersey passed similar legislation, establishing itself as a leader in the fight against drowsy drivers. I urge New York State to follow their example and pass A.7311. This legislation will save many lives, and force New Yorkers to recognize the danger presented by driving while fatigued.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.