



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins: Tougher Penalties for Unlicensed Drivers Who Kill or Injure Others Passed by Senate

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Senator Jack M. Martins (R-7th Senate District) today announced that legislation he sponsored to strengthen penalties for individuals who kill or injure someone while driving with a suspended or revoked license has been passed by the New York State Senate. The legislation would dramatically strengthen current law which only allows these criminals to face a maximum jail sentence of six months.

Senator Martins said, “No one should be able to drive illegally with a suspended or revoked license, kill someone, and only face a maximum jail sentence of six months; the current law is so inadequate that it basically allows people to get away with murder. For far too long, the state allowed these crimes to be treated as slaps on the wrist; it needs to stop now before another heartbroken family has to watch their loved one’s killer walk away with a slap on the wrist. The Assembly must join

us, listen to the pleas from law enforcement and victims' families, and pass this legislation," said Senator Martins.

Senator Martins' legislation (S4649A) would create felony charges for individuals who kill or injure someone while driving with a suspended or revoked license. These drivers would face up to four years in prison if they cause serious injury to another person and up to seven years in prison if they take someone's life.

Under current law, people driving with suspended or revoked licenses who kill or injure someone face only misdemeanor charges carrying a maximum sentence of six months in jail.

Nassau County District Attorney Madeline Singas, who worked with Senator Martins in drafting the legislation, said, "Today the Senate has agreed that innocent people should not have to live in fear of drivers who should not be on the road. I am hopeful that the Assembly will also pass this essential public safety bill."

Unlicensed drivers have repeatedly caused tragedies on Long Island. On December 11, 2014, 12 year old Zachary Ranftle was killed in Valley Stream by a driver who later pled guilty to driving with a suspended license. The driver was sentenced to six months in jail for that crime, the maximum allowable sentence under current law. At the sentencing, Zachary's family called the current law "inadequate."

In June 2012, 19 year old Stephen Fay of Westbury was killed when his motorcycle collided with a box truck driven by a man with a suspended license, who was later charged with a misdemeanor. Stephen's mother, Pennie Fay, launched an advocacy campaign to strengthen the current law.

The legislation has been sent to the Assembly.