

JOHN SPIROS

State Representative • 86th Assembly District

Assembly Bill 197

December 5, 2017

Testimony from Rep. Spiros

Hello, and thank you Chairman Ripp and members of the Assembly Committee on Transportation for allowing me to have the opportunity to share my testimony with you today regarding Assembly Bill 197, which would help to address the overwhelming problem of drunk driving in Wisconsin.

This bill would create a standard punishment by revoking the driver's license of a repeat OWI offender after the fourth OWI, or after the second OWI in combination with two other serious OWI-related offenses such as injury by intoxicated use of a vehicle or second-degree reckless homicide involving a vehicle. Currently, there is no standard revocation time for someone who has committed this many OWI offenses. Revocation or suspension can be ordered by a court or by the Department of Transportation, however the amount of time is inconsistent and these revocations can last anywhere from several months to several years. There has been inconsistency from case to case as far as punishment and revocation, and this bill seeks to fix that inconsistency.

Under current law, individuals who have had their license revoked may still apply for an occupational license, which restricts when and where they can drive. Under this bill, the individual would not be eligible for an occupational license. However, ten years after the revocation goes into effect, the individual may apply for reinstatement of operating privileges.

As we all know, drunk driving is a serious problem in Wisconsin. According to data collected by the Department of Transportation, Wisconsin had over 1,800 convictions for drivers that committed their 4th or higher OWI offense in 2015 alone. 986 of those were fourth offense OWI's. Due to the nearly 500 hundred 5th offense convictions, statistics show our current penalties are not enough of a deterrent.

This is a serious public safety issue in Wisconsin. Over the last ten years, an average of 33 people per year were charged with negligent homicide while intoxicated. That is 33 individuals every year who made the egregious decision to get behind the wheel of a vehicle while drunk, and took someone else's life in the process.

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Ultimately our goal with this bill is to make Wisconsin's roads safer by keeping habitual OWI offenders off the road by permanently revoking their license. This bill has received support from law enforcement across the state, and passed through committee in the Senate on a bipartisan vote.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to share testimony in support of this bill, and I welcome any questions.



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

December 5, 2017

Senator Van Wanggaard Testimony on Assembly Bill 197

Thank you Chairman Ripp and members of the committee, for hearing Assembly Bill 197 (AB 197) today. I am honored to have co-authored this legislation with Representative Spiros. This legislation will keep Wisconsin roadways and communities safer from drunk drivers by permanently revoking licenses for repeat operating while intoxicated (OWI) offenders.

Under current law, revocation periods and punishments for repeat OWI offenses vary based on the circumstances and prior convictions. Once the license is revoked, the offender can apply for an occupational license, allowing the individual to drive in limited situations.

Assembly Bill 197 requires DOT to permanently revoke the driver's license of a repeat OWI offender after their fourth OWI, or after their second OWI in combination with multiple serious OWI-related vehicular offenses. Revocation would last ten years and the offenders would be able to have their licenses reinstated if they have not been convicted of a crime during that period, they submit to an alcohol assessment, and develop a driver safety plan.

In Wisconsin we unfortunately are all too familiar with stories about habitual drunk drivers. During my time in law enforcement as an accident reconstructionist and traffic investigator, I witnessed firsthand the devastating effects drunk drivers have on our citizens and local communities. In 2015 alone there were 1,859 convictions for drivers that committed their 4th or higher OWI offense.

These drivers we are targeting with this legislation have had opportunities to seek treatment and correct their unacceptable behavior. Because they have not, we must take action to keep them off the roadways to protect Wisconsin communities. The legislature would send a clear message to those who blatantly violate our traffic laws that driving is a privilege and not a right.

I have also authored ignition interlock legislation and acknowledge that this bill will certainly not eliminate drunk driving, but we must adopt a multi-faceted approach to address this serious problem. This bill would be another tool in the tool box to address the problem of habitual drunk driving. Considering the serious risk it poses to our safety, AB 197 is a reasonable response.

This bill is a bipartisan effort that has earned the support from multiple law enforcement organizations. Earlier this year it passed in the senate unanimously, and I urge the members of this committee to support it as well.

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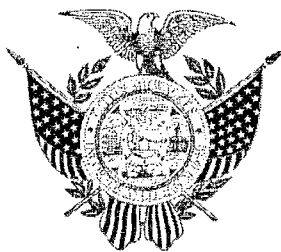
COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

CHAIR

- Milwaukee Arts Board
- Housing Trust Fund Advisory Board

MEMBER

- Finance and Personnel Committee
- Public Works Committee



MICHAEL J. MURPHY
ALDERMAN, 10TH DISTRICT

December 5, 2017

RE: Assembly Bill 197 Testimony to Committee

Good morning, my name is Alderman Michael Murphy. I represent the 10th District of Milwaukee. Thank you to Chairman Ripp and committee members for allowing me to testify today in support of Assembly Bill 197. The City of Milwaukee supports enhanced penalties, both criminal and financial, to better address the public safety challenge presented by individuals operating while under the influence of alcohol or another controlled substance. The City supports expanding circumstances requiring revocation for those repeatedly operating a vehicle while intoxicated, and we believe these enhanced provisions within this legislation will make our City and State safer. I would like to share a few statistics demonstrating the extent of the OWI-realities we face to help inform the discussion among committee members.

In 2016, the State of Wisconsin reported alcohol as a contributing factor in 4% of all crashes. In 2016, 24% of all vehicle crash fatalities in Wisconsin were alcohol-related, resulting in 143 fatalities. In 2016, the City of Milwaukee witnessed 14,576 traffic crashes that resulted in 57 fatalities. As of October 2017, the City of Milwaukee reported 10,506 crashes, resulting in 4,512 injuries and 47 fatalities. Of the 10,506 crashes, 281 were OWI related and there were three (3) reported fatalities. In total within the City of Milwaukee in 2017, 537 citations were issued for Operating While Intoxicated. The challenge created by driving under the influence is not only a public safety one, but an economic one. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation estimates that alcohol-related crashes cost the state over \$400 million annually. I imagine we all agree these taxpayer dollars could be better spent investing in our educational system and our local economies, or addressing Wisconsin's growing opioid epidemic.

The City of Milwaukee supports Assembly Bill 197. I would be pleased to answer any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Michael J. Murphy in cursive script.

Michael J. Murphy
Alderman, 10th District