



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

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Senator Van Wanggaard Testimony on Senate Bill 135

Thank you members of the committee, for hearing Senate Bill 135 (SB 135) 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.

Senate Bill 135 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, SB 135 is a reasonable response.

This bill is a bipartisan effort that has earned the support from multiple law enforcement organizations and I urge the members of my committee to support it as well.

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