



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
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Milwaukee Legislator Blasts Racine Judge for Ignoring State law

Milwaukee - State Representative Josh Zepnick expressed outrage at the bare minimum sentence for the killing of Nancy Sellars. Zepnick has been at the front lines of recent actions in the Wisconsin Legislature to increase penalties and reduce the damages that drunk drivers cause. Zepnick's sister Jamie was also riding her bicycle in 1990 when killed by a drunk driver.

"Racine County Circuit Judge Stephen Simanek should be ashamed of himself, people should demand that Simanek publicly explain his decision and hold him accountable. I have said for years the Legislature is only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to getting tougher on drunk driving issues. The maximum sentence available to Simanek was 25 years and instead he chose to issue an incredibly weak and worthless 30 MONTHS! To add insult to injury, Simanek is quoted in the news media saying, "People have to be frightened, I think, to not drink and drive."

The person who killed Sellars is likely to walk free from prison in just a few months—now *that* is the frightening part. When my sister was killed, the maximum sentence available to judges was 5 years for vehicular manslaughter and 5 years for leaving the scene. In our family's case, the driver got the maximum but only served about 4 years.

Zepnick added: "What is frightening is the total disrespect for justice that Simanek handed down yesterday. Just recently, Judge Simanek issued a 3 year sentence for Racine Mayor Gary Becker. While Becker's actions are sick and destructive, Becker never killed anyone, yet he gets a longer sentence than someone who flew down the highway at 50mph and never stopped after killing a bicyclist!" Another question worth asking for Racine County residents, is why the case was routed to the Civil Division instead of Felony where it belonged?

"Wisconsin citizens need to know that when State laws are changed to reflect the public's call for cracking down harder on drunk drivers, the job is not done unless judges are expected to show some, well, good judgment. A few years ago, Waukesha County Judge Dreyfus allowed repeat offender Mark Benson off lightly only to several days later kill Jennifer Bukosky and her 2 children. We did our work in the Legislature and I hope the public speaks up about this mismatch between the public mandate for seeing fewer victims like Nancy Sellars, Jamie Zepnick or Jennifer Bukosky and the actions of Judge Simanek who undermine public safety with absurd decisions.