

Sen. Larson and Rep. Andraca: Team up to stop drunk driving before it happens

Posted on Monday, Nov 22, 2021

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Bayside, WI – Senator Chris Larson and Representative Deb Andraca issued the following statement regarding the introduction of legislation to require ignition interlock devices (IIDs) for all first-time alcohol-related operating while intoxicated (OWI) offenders as well as incorporating Wisconsin into the interstate Driver License Compact.

Senator Larson began by stating:

“On Christmas Eve 1998, I woke up to find out that my good friend and classmate at Thomas More High School, Jennie, had been killed by a drunk driver the night before. It was a devastating blow to each of her friends and everyone who knew her. It was a horrible, preventable tragedy and something that shaped each of our lives going forward. If I could have done something to bring my friend back, I would have. Unfortunately, stories like hers are not uncommon in Wisconsin.

“Sadly, twenty-three years later, stories like Jennie’s are still happening because Wisconsin’s laws remain woefully inadequate in addressing and preventing drunk driving in Wisconsin. With nearly 26% of adults admitting to driving while intoxicated, Wisconsin continues to top the national charts with the highest rate of drunk driving. More alarmingly, first-time OWI offenders are estimated to have driven under the influence at least 80 times before their initial conviction.

“The use of ignition interlock devices (IIDs) has been shown to be successful in changing offenders’ behavior. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention IIDs reduce drunk driving recidivism by 67%. These devices separate

drinking from driving, and are proven to be effective in stopping drunk driving.”

In the past ten years, drunk driving has cost the lives of nearly 1,500 of our neighbors as well as seriously injuring over 5,000 more.

Rep. Andraca continued with this statement:

“In 2019, over 27,000 individuals were cited for operating under the influence in Wisconsin. The Interstate Driver License Compact is a contract between states that enforces OWI convictions by agreeing to honor the OWI license suspension requirements in the state in which the OWI took place.

“Currently, Wisconsin is one out of only five states not currently engaged in this compact. The compact creates uniformity and reduced administrative costs so that each driver, nationwide, has only one driver license and one driver control record (DCR). Though Wisconsin’s Department of Transportation (DOT) complies with the compact responsibilities, not being a part of the framework allows individuals to slip through the cracks—with tragic consequences.

“On April 5, 2019, a drunk driver crashed into the back of a family’s SUV on Highway 50 in Kenosha County, killing three and injuring one more. The suspected drunk driver’s license had been revoked years earlier by a Wisconsin court for not meeting the conditions of previous OWI conviction, but the driver was able to renew an old Illinois license.

“Though Wisconsin had entered this driver’s OWI information into the Problem Driver Pointer System (PDPS), Illinois used the Driver License Compact parameters in screening his application. Adding Wisconsin to the interstate Driver License Compact will close a dangerous loophole, improve data sharing and best practices moving forward, and help keep dangerous drivers off the road — in Wisconsin and every member state.”

Senator Laron and Representative Andraca concluded by stating:

“The legislation we are reintroducing seeks to bring us into the modern world, reduce drunk driving, and ensure there will be clear, proportional consequences when someone is convicted of driving under the influence.”