



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

January 21, 2016

Senator Van Wanggaard Testimony on Senate Bill 335

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for scheduling this hearing today on Senate Bill 335 (SB 335). I am honored to have co-authored this legislation with Representative Genrich and I applaud him on all the effort he has put into this bill. 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 335 requires DOT to permanently revoke the driver's license of a repeat OWI offender after their fifth OWI, or after their third 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. Wisconsin has nearly 5,000 alcohol related crashes annually, resulting in over 200 fatalities and roughly 3,000 injuries. In 2014 alone there were 822 convictions for drivers that committed their 5th or higher OWI offense.

These drivers we are targeting with this legislation have had multiple 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 335 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 the Transportation Committee to support it as well.

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ERIC GENRICH

STATE REPRESENTATIVE — 90TH DISTRICT



**Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs
Public Hearing, January 21, 2016
Senate Bill 335 Testimony**

Chairman Petrowski and Members of the Senate Committee on Transportation and Veterans Affairs,

Thank you for holding a hearing today on Senate Bill 335, which requires the absolute revocation of a driver's license for a minimum of ten years after an offender's fifth OWI, or after their third OWI in combination with two serious vehicular offenses. The bill further allows for driving privileges to be granted back to the offender after a ten year period if the individual has been free of offense, has passed a drug and alcohol assessment, and has created a safe driving plan.

Drunk driving-related fatalities have been cut in half over the past ten years due to the efforts of legislators, judges, and local law enforcement, but, Mr. Chairman, as you know well, Wisconsin's drunk driving problem continues to be serious and intolerable. According to DOT data reported by Gannett Wisconsin Media, 822 motorists were convicted of their fifth or greater OWI offense in Wisconsin just last year. Additionally, based on the DOT data my office has analyzed, there are 36,366 individuals in Wisconsin who already possess four or more OWIs and would be eligible for license revocation under this bill if they decide to drink and drive. Habitual repeat offenders are a real threat to the safety of our fellow citizens, and I believe we must take all reasonable action to reduce the likelihood of habitual re-offense, which is why I have authored this legislation.

It goes without saying that this bill will not solve all that ails us. If this legislation were to become law, some habitual offenders will continue to make the wrong decision and endanger themselves and others on Wisconsin's roads. But many will not. The deterrence effect of license revocations is real and documented, especially when those revocations are clear and stringent, as is the case with SB 335. With that in mind, I believe this legislation represents an important step in the continuing effort to reduce the problem of drunk driving.

As you can see, SB 335 has strong bipartisan authorship in both houses. It enjoys the support of many stakeholders in the law enforcement community, including the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, the Badger State Sheriffs Association, and the Wisconsin Sheriffs & Deputy Sheriffs Association. And it is supported by the Chief Judge of Wisconsin's Eighth Judicial Administrative District, the Honorable Donald Zuidmulder, as well as Brown County Sheriff John Gossage.

As I've said before, there is no silver bullet for this problem, but that is no argument for inaction. This proposal is another message to habitual drunk drivers that this behavior will not be tolerated on Wisconsin's roads. Enough is enough.

Once again, I want to thank Chairman Petrowski for holding a hearing today. At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions from the committee.