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LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

PA PASSES TOUGHER DUI LAW

Pa. lawmakers pass bill increasing penalties for repeat DUI offenders

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By [Charles Thompson cthompson@pennlive.com](mailto:cthompson@pennlive.com)

The Pennsylvania legislature passed legislation Wednesday to lengthen mandatory minimum prison terms for persons convicted of vehicular homicide while under the influence who have prior DUI convictions.

[Under its terms](#), drivers who cause a new fatal accident while under the influence would face a minimum term of five years for each death caused, up from the current three, if they had a previous DUI conviction.

The minimum term would jump to seven years for someone with two or more prior DUI convictions. Prime sponsor Sen. John Rafferty, a Montgomery County Republican, said he hopes the stiffer prison terms will have a deterrent effect on persons with DUIs in their past.

The bill also targets harsher penalties for two other groups of repeat offenders. Senate Bill 961 regrades DUI charges as a felony for people being arrested for the third time with blood-alcohol content levels testing at .16 percent or higher, and in all fourth or subsequent arrests for drunk or drugged driving. This would have the effect of enhancing penalties for those multiple repeat offenders. At present, Pennsylvania is one of just four states that treat all standard DUI convictions as misdemeanors.

Finally, the bill also raises punishments for persons imposes a stepladder of stiffer penalties for repeat violations of driving with a license that has been suspended for DUI.

Supporters of the tougher penalties have pointed out many of these same offenders now have an opportunity to [continue driving through the suspension if they agree to use an ignition interlock device](#). The stricter punishments passed easily in both chambers on the last voting session of the 2017-18 term, cruising through the House on a 184-1 vote, and then passing in the Senate by 45-4.

See full article at: https://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2018/10/general_assembly_passes_bill_i.html#incart_2box_politics

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