



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – MARCH 31, 2004

CONTACT:
Mitchell Englander
Chief of Staff
City Hall: 213-473-7012

PRESS RELEASE

COUCILMEMBER GREIG SMITH - DISTRICT 12

Page 1 of 2

COUNCILMAN GREIG SMITH SAYS: DRINK AND DRIVE... LOSE YOUR RIDE

Los Angeles - Councilman Greig Smith was joined by Police Chief William Bratton, City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo, and Tina Pasco, Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) as he introduced landmark legislation which would permit the seizure and subsequent auction of any motor vehicle involved in a DUI offence.

Citing 2,218 citywide DUI-related traffic collisions and 9,812 arrests in 2003, as well as a 24% increase in DUI-related vehicle collisions in the Twelfth District from 2001-2003, Councilman Smith called drunk driving "the nation's most frequently-committed violent crime – responsible for a loss of life every 30 minutes and an injury every two minutes." Smith went on to say, "the biggest tragedy is that these deaths and injuries are 100% preventable. This legislation will reduce the number of alcohol-related collisions. It will absolutely save lives and make our streets safer."

Although there's been a citywide reduction in DUI-related traffic collisions over the last three years, the City still had well over 7,500 DUI-related traffic collisions resulting in over 100 fatalities. Driving-under-the-influence continues to be a problem within the City and is a priority within the LAPD.

LAPD Chief William Bratton said: "Despite the best enforcement efforts of my Department, driving while drunk or under the influence of drugs, continues to be a problem in the City of Los Angeles. We can arrest and jail a driver under the influence. But unless we can take away their keys, and their cars...they can and will continue to be a deadly menace on city streets. The LAPD fully supports Councilman Smith's motion for a City ordinance that would permit the forfeiture/confiscation of vehicles for driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs."

In the past, the City Council has voted to seize vehicles that are involved in illegal street racing, solicitation of prostitution, illegal dumping and narcotics violations. "Car seizures are unique because they are in fact instrumental in the commission of the crime," City Attorney Rocky Delgadillo said. "A drunken driver can wreak havoc and cause untold amounts of carnage. The inherent danger is that drinking and diving is a habitual problem. We're going to look at the law and see what we need to do in order to literally take the wheel away from drunken drivers."

Despite increasing penalties including license suspension, probation, jail sentences, driving under the influence (DUI) continues to be a problem. Years of data show that crashes involving

an alcohol-impaired or intoxicated driver are about 50% more likely to result in an injury or fatality than crashes in which alcohol was not involved.

Recent statistics released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration show that last year the nation experienced the largest percentage increase in alcohol-related traffic deaths on record. MADD has said that they are “alarmed by this reversal of 20 years of progress.”

Smith’s motion also calls for the LAPD to develop a public awareness campaign advertising the effects and consequences of driving under the influence, including the possibility of losing one’s vehicle.

COUNCILMAN GREIG SMITH SAYS: DRINK AND DRIVE. . . LOSE YOUR RIDE