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**CAMPAIGN TO
ELIMINATE
DRUNK DRIVING**

January 27, 2010

The Honorable Robert Turner
Chairman, Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice
State Capitol, Room 223 North
Madison, Wisconsin 53708

Dear Chairman Turner,

Thank you for supporting drunk driving reform legislation SB 66 and AB 283 in 2009. The legislation represented unheralded progress for Wisconsin due to the leadership of many. However, more action is needed and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) urges your consideration of holding a public hearing on Assembly Bill 547. AB 547 will help prevent drunk driving by legalizing sobriety checkpoints and making a first OWI offense a misdemeanor.

Drunk driving is a taxpayer subsidized violent crime. Between 1998 to 2008 in Wisconsin, 3,196 people died in drunk driving crashes. In that same time period, 67,588 people were injured in alcohol related crashes. For these 100 percent preventable deaths and injuries, the state and taxpayers have paid at least \$6.7 billion. AB 547 is necessary as it aims to prevent drunk driving from occurring and lifting the taxpayer subsidy of drunk driving.

Giving the option for law enforcement to perform sobriety checkpoints, which are funded by federal grants in other states, can help find and charge those endangering public safety. As a result, people who drink are deterred to drive because enhanced enforcement increases one's fear of being arrested. The Centers for Disease Control found that when well-publicized sobriety checkpoints were run, alcohol-related crashes and fatalities decreased by more than 20 percent.

AB 547 makes a first offense a misdemeanor and serves as a deterrent to drunk driving occurring in the first place. Studies show that a first time convicted OWI offender has driven drunk an average of 87 times before they are caught. According to Wisconsin DOT, most drunk driving deaths and injuries are caused by drunk drivers with no prior convictions. Clearly, a stronger deterrent is needed to stop drunk driving from occurring in the first place.

I urge you allow for the sunshine of open government to shine in and allow for AB 547 to receive a public hearing and an up or down vote in Committee. MADD believes the legislation is critical to helping prevent drunk driving by allowing law enforcement the option to perform sobriety checkpoints and helps make the punishment fit the crime by making a first OWI offense a misdemeanor.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this legislation to receive a hearing in the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice.

Sincerely,

Laura Dean-Mooney
National President
Mothers Against Drunk Driving