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### **Press Release**

#### **Stopping DUIs One Breath at a Time**

Honolulu – Three Thousand-six hundred twenty two. This isn't the number of people who went to New Orleans to celebrate Hawaii's Sugar Bowl bid. It represents the number of people who have been arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence from January 1, 2007 through November 30, 2007. The rise in arrests has been attributed to additional federal funding that helped arm our police forces with resources to increase road blocks on our islands to eliminate the threats imposed by drunk drivers. But we must realize that this increase in arrests represent only a fraction of those who drink and drive. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), national studies show that a person has driven impaired (blood alcohol level of .08 or more) at least 87 times before getting caught for the first time. We in the Republican Caucus believe that this number is too high and something needs to be done. We have introduced a number of bills this legislative session to protect Hawaii from drunk drivers and increase penalties against those who put innocent lives at risk by driving carelessly.

One of our bills establishes an ignition interlock program for Hawaii. This program is not new. The first ignition interlock mechanism was introduced in the 1970s. Since then,

45 states have initiated some type of ignition interlock program. Unfortunately, Hawaii is one of five states that have not chosen to utilize this technology. The ignition interlock system is a device that makes sure that those who have been convicted of DUIs do not get behind the wheel of their cars while intoxicated. To activate a car's ignition, a person must blow into the interlock device and the car will only start if the person blowing does not register an illegal alcohol concentration greater than a pre-set level determined by law. Not only does the device register the alcohol concentration before the driver can start the car, it also requires the driver to retest intermittently while driving. If the driver does not retest, data will show that the person ignored the request and they may be arrested or fined for violating the terms of their DUI sentence. Most devices include cameras to show who has actually blown into the mechanism.

The cost of the program is ZERO for law-abiding citizens. The program will be funded by those who have been arrested for DUIs. The convicted driver must pay for the device to be installed in their automobile at a cost between \$70-\$150. The convicted driver must also pay \$60-\$80 per month for monitoring and calibration of the mechanism.

Hawaii's small fines and limited jail time requirement have not been a sufficient deterrent for DUI offenders. In 2006, Hawaii became the worst state in the nation in percent of alcohol-related traffic fatalities. The members of the Republican caucuses in both chambers of the Legislature have introduced bills that will discourage people from drinking and driving.

Last session, the Legislature passed laws on pedestrian safety. But some drivers still do not take extra precautions to assure that they do not violate the "Pedestrians' Right-of-Way." That is why our "Road Responsibility Bill of 2008" increases fines on drivers who violate pedestrian safety laws. The bill also lengthens the suspension time of a person's driver's license from 90 to 180 days for the second offense and completely revokes a person's driver's license and privilege to operate a vehicle on the third offense.

The members of the Republican caucuses want to make sure that something will get done this session. Enough innocent lives have been lost. The Legislature must work in a bipartisan manner to ensure our keiki and kapuna are safe when they walk on the streets or ride in their cars. I urge the public not to let these important measures go by the way side during the busy legislative session. Stay involved and together we can make Hawaii safer for all of us.