

Phil Barnhart
State Representative
House District 11

Kim Thatcher
State Representative
House District 25

House of Representative
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

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Contact:
Office of Rep. Barnhart
(503) 986-1411
Office of Rep. Thatcher
Dawn Phillips
(503) 750-1764

House Passes Bill to Crack Down on Chronic Driving While Suspended Offenders

SALEM – An important measure to crack down on the number of repeat offenders who continue to drive with suspended licenses was adopted by the Oregon House of Representatives today. [House Bill 2384](#) passed on the House floor by a vote of 56 to 2 and now moves to the State Senate.

The chief sponsors of HB 2384 are State Representatives [Phil Barnhart](#) (D-Central Land and Linn counties) and [Kim Thatcher](#) (R-Keizer, Newberg and St. Paul). The bill allows law enforcement officers to seize cars and initiate forfeiture for a limited category of people, the most serious offenders, who've already been convicted once for criminal or aggravated driving while suspended (DWS) or revoked. (Oregon Revised Statutes 811.182 and 163.196) If adopted by the legislature, these offenders would be subject to the new law after their second conviction for those DWS crimes.

"I became concerned when a constituent contacted me after she was rear ended by a person who was driving with a suspended license," said Barnhart. "This bill would give an additional tool to law enforcement to keep our roads safe"

Representative Thatcher explained she joined forces with Representative Barnhart after a patrol sergeant in her legislative district urged her to change state law. "He came to me frustrated, after pulling over these driving while suspended offenders time and time again, only to issue them yet another ticket and watching them drive off without a license."

According to the Oregon Department of Transportation if HB 2384 had been in place by the end of 2012, around 1,350 offenders could potentially have been impacted because they have been convicted of one of the DWS crimes listed in the measure over the past three years.

"What better way to deter repeat offenders than by taking away the tool (the car) they use to commit their crime, driving while suspended?" said Daina Vitols, Crook County District Attorney, Co-Chair of the Oregon District Attorneys Association's (ODAA) legislative committee and member of the ODAA board. "Repeat offenders continue to drive because they continue to have access to cars. Seizing and forfeiting vehicles from repeat offenders will help stop their continual disregard of the motor vehicle laws the majority of the public abide by because they won't have a vehicle to drive."

"We believe that the addition of forfeiture as a tool and an option for officers who stop chronic DWS offenders will result in fewer repeat offenders and increased safety for our motoring public," added Kevin Campbell with the Oregon Association Chiefs of Police

Darrell Fuller representing the Oregon State Sheriffs' Association said, "with the inability, in some counties, to provide bed space for chronic offenders who ignore fines and citations, the ability to seize their vehicle may be the only option law enforcement has to get their attention and keep them off the roads."

Supporters of the bill include; the [Oregon State Sheriff's Association](#), the [Oregon Association Chiefs of Police](#), the [Oregon District Attorneys Association](#), and the [Oregon Anti-Crime Alliance](#).

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