Office of Research and Policy Analysis

SJR 39: A Primer

Background and Study Tasks for the Study of DUI Laws and Enforcement

A REPORT TO THE LAW AND JUSTICE INTERIM COMMITTEE

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Background and Study Tasks for the Study of the DUI Laws and Enforcement

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for the

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NOTE: This paper briefly covers the issues involved in the SJR 39 study, relevant law in other states, Montana's DUI laws, and specific study tasks. The attachments provide reference material for further information and suggested reading. A list of the attachments is provided on page 16.

ACTION ITEM: Threshold study questions for stakeholder comment and committee discussion and action are provided on page 15.

Issue overview

Stories

We know the stories. They are tragic and all too common: Two men killed in a head-on collision caused by an intoxicated driver going the wrong way on the highway; ¹ a 2-year-old girl killed when a driver with a blood alcohol content of three times the legal limit of 0.8 percent blood alcohol content (BAC) backed over her with his pickup truck; ² a National Guardsman and father of two young boys who was killed in a fiery crash caused by a drunk driver; ³ a Montana Highway Patrolman who died after his patrol car was struck in an accident caused by a drunk driver; and a mother whose 10-year-old daughter was killed

¹ The Associated Press, "Judge sets high bond for man accused of fatal DUI", *Billings Gazette*, August 16, 2008.

² The Associated Press, "Man guilty of manslaughter in DUI case", *Billings Gazette*, July 25, 2008.

³ Gazette News Service, "Man sentenced for fatal DUI crash", *Billings Gazette*, November 27, 2007.

when the mother rolled the car driving home after having mixed drinks with dinner and who had a BAC of 0.13 four hours after the accident.⁴

There are also stories about repeat offenders such as of a man already on probation for a felony DUI who is arrested for his 7th DUI after crashing into another driver in Billings;⁵ a Great Falls man who is arrested for an 11th DUI after already completing a correctional treatment program;⁶ a 39-year-old Bozeman man who is arrested on his 11th DUI with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of three times the legal limit.⁷

Statistics

We know the numbers, too; and they are staggering. On average, someone is killed in an alcohol-related crash every 40 minutes; ⁸ 3 out of 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives; ⁹ and one-third of all drivers arrested or convicted of driving while intoxicated are repeat offenders. ¹⁰

The Century Council, a national independent non-profit organization funded by distillers and that focuses on hardcore drunk drivers and underage drinking, reports that repeat offenders

⁴ Greg Tuttle, "Mom denies guilt in car fatality case", *Billings Gazette,* January 6, 2009.

⁵ The Gazette Staff, "Man on probation pleads not guilty to his 7th DUI", *Billings Gazette*, March 19, 2009.

⁶ Zachary Franz, "11th DUI has officials questioning how to keep offenders off road", *Great Falls Tribune*, May 22, 2009.

⁷ Kellyn Brown, "Multiple DUI offenders increasing", *Bozeman Daily Chronicle*, November 9, 2007.

⁸ Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), "Summary of drunk driving statistics and underage drinking statistics", updated Dec. 3, 2008, citing the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), "2007 Traffic Safety Annual Assessment - Alcohol Impaired Driving Fatalities", No. 811 016, U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), 2008.

⁹ Ibid. , citing the NHTSA, "The Traffic Stops and You: Improving Communications Between Citizens and Law Enforcement", No. HS 809 212, U.S. Department of Transportation, March 2001.

¹⁰ Ibid., citing Jim Fell, "Repeat DWI Offenders in the United States", NHTSA. U.S. DOT, Tech No. 85, February 1995.

with BAC of .15 percent or more are highly resistant to changing their behavior despite previous sanctions, treatment or education, and they continue to account for a disproportionate share of alcohol-related traffic fatalities each year. The Century Council reports that, in 2007, 67% of drivers involved in alcohol-impaired driving fatalities had a BAC level of .15 or higher – a trend that has remained relatively unchanged for more than a decade.¹¹

Underage drinking and driving

Underage drinking and driving is also a serious concern. Fatalities involving underage (under 21 years old) alcohol-impaired drivers account for 14% of all alcohol-related driving fatalities in the U.S.; and five youth die in alcohol-related crashes each day.¹²

Some good news

There is, however, some good news. Between 1982 and 2007, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities per 100,000 people has decreased nationally by 53 percent for adults and by 70 percent among youth under 21 years of age.¹³ And, alcohol-related crashes in Montana have been declining overall.¹⁴

Montana's statistics

How does Montana stack up? In 2007, which is the most current data readily available, Montana ranked the highest in the nation for the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. Montana also ranks first in the nation for the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities per 100,000 people (13.9 fatalities per 100,000

¹¹ See http://www.centurycouncil.org/learn-the-facts/research#888.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ The Century Council, "State of Drunk Driving Fatalities in America", 2007.

¹⁴ See Montana Department of Transportation webpage at www.mdt.mt.gov/publications/datastats/alccrash.shtml.

¹⁵ NHTSA, "Traffic Safety Facts: Fatalities and Fatality Rates in Alcohol-Impaired Driving Crashes by State", DOT HS 811 099, February 2009.

people compared to a national average of 5.6).¹⁶ Nearly 40% of all traffic fatalities in Montana involve an alcohol-impaired driver, which is the third highest percentage in the country, including the District of Columbia.¹⁷ According to a new study based on self-reporting, more than 20% of drivers in Montana reported they have driven under the influence of alcohol. The study showed that this problem is the highest in the Midwest. Montana ranked 9th highest.¹⁸

The questions

We read the stories, we look at the numbers, and we search for answers. But all we seem to have are questions. Do we need tougher laws? Should we regulate retailers and servers? Are harsher penalties even effective? What about treatment? Can we intervene earlier? Do prevention programs work? How can we change our attitudes and culture about drinking and driving? And, whatever we decide to do, how will we afford it?¹⁹

By enacting SJR 39, the 2009 Legislature placed these questions squarely in front of the Law and Justice Interim Committee (LJIC).

Current Montana law

Legal limits - BAC

Montana law provides that:

a 0.08 BAC is illegal per se (i.e., under the influence may be inferred);

¹⁶ The Century Council, "State of Drunk Driving Fatalities in America", 2007.

¹⁷ MADD, "State Progress Report", Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving Report Card, November 15, 2007. Includes the District of Columbia.

¹⁸ National Conference for State Legislatures, "NCSL Substance Abuse Snapshot: Emerging Issues", April 30, 2008.

¹⁹ See the following three attached newspaper articles: Kellyn Brown, "Multiple DUI offenders increasing", *Bozeman Chronical*, July 1, 2009; Zachary Franz, "11th DUI has officials questioning how to keep offenders off road", *Great Falls Tribune*, May 22, 2009; and Michael Jamison, "DUI foes pushing for cultural shift", *Billings Gazette*, June 3, 2009.

- if BAC is in excess of 0.04, but less than 0.08, then "under the influence" may not be inferred, but may be considered a fact supported by other evidence;
- if BAC is 0.04 or less, then "under the influence" may not be inferred; and ²⁰
- for those under 21 years of age, 0.02 BAC is considered "under the influence". 21

Implied consent to test BAC

Montana law provides for "implied consent", which means a driver in Montana is considered to have given consent to a test of the person's blood or breath for the purpose of determining alcohol or drug content if the officer has "reasonable grounds" to believe the person is under the influence .²² If a person refuses the test, the officer may immediately seize the person's driver's license and issue a temporary permit effective 12 hours after the license was seized and is valid for only 5 days. The length of the suspension is as follows:

- 1st refusal 6 months, no provision for a restricted probationary license; and
- 2nd and subsequent refusal within 5 years 1 year, no provision for a restricted probationary license.

Summary of other basic provisions

A TABLE summarizing Montana's other basic DUI laws is provided as the second attachment to this report.

Comparisons with other states

Several attachments are included with this report that provide state-by-state comparisons of certain DUI laws. A list of attachments is provided on the last page of this report.

²⁰ Section 61-8-401(3), Montana Code Annotated (MCA).

²¹ Section 61-8-410, MCA.

²² Section 61-8-402, MCA.

Suggested solutions

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)

The NHTSA is the federal government's lead agency for initiatives to combat impaired driving. The NHTSA has been promoting (and in some instances providing states with grant funding for) the following types of initiatives:

- high visibility law enforcement such as sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols;
- specialty DUI courts (modeled after drug courts) designed to provide intense judicial supervision that require offender compliance with court-ordered sanctions and treatment;
- assistance for overwhelmed DUI prosecutors aimed at reducing inappropriate plea bargaining, diversion of offenders to non-treatment programs, and other negotiated sentences;
- streamlining the law enforcement process and simplifying the paperwork required when an officer makes a DUI arrest;
- Imiting pre-conviction diversion (e.g., the practice of dismissing charges after completion of an educational program) and promoting post-conviction alternative sanctions, such as:
 - electronic monitoring;
 - intensive probation supervision;
 - daily reporting centers;
 - vehicle forfeiture; and
 - breath alcohol ignition interlocks.
- training programs to improve the quality of BAC testing and laws that authorize more BAC testing; and

improvements to impaired driving records management systems so that more data can be exchanged among courts, law enforcement agencies, and the motor vehicles division.²³

The Century Council

The Century Council advocates the following policies:

- enhanced penalties of high BAC limits (.15 percent and above);
- graduated penalties for repeat offenders;
- enhanced penalties for BAC test refusal;
- vehicle-based sanctions;
- mandatory ignition interlocks for first time offenders at .15 percent BAC and above;
- mandatory ignition interlocks for repeat offenders;
- mandatory ignition interlocks for test refusal;
- judicial discretion regarding ignition interlocks for first offenders with BAC below .15 percent;
- home confinement with electronic monitoring;
- court ordered alcohol assessment;
- treatment and aftercare;
- minimum 10 year look back periods;
- DUI tracking systems;
- DUI courts;
- staggered sentencing;
- self-sustaining anti-drunk driving programs (i.e., programs supported by dedicated traffic-related revenue sources);
- judicial education and training;
- restrictions on plea bargaining;
- prohibition of open containers in the vehicle;
- BAC education; and
- graduated licensing.²⁴

²³ NHTSA, "Initiatives to Address Impaired Driving", December 2003.

²⁴ See http://www.centurycouncil.org/fight-drunk-driving/public-policy.

Some of these laws are already in place in Montana. Some of these laws are not, or are, but not to the extent advocated.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

As part of its national Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving, Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) advocates that states adopt certain laws. On its website, MADD lists the following as laws that it supports, but that have not yet been enacted in Montana. However, Montana's laws do address some of these areas, so perhaps the laws are not as strict as advocated by MADD:

- seizure and sale of the vehicle operated by an offender after a certain number of offenses;
- a primary seatbelt law;
- immediate removal of an offender's driver's license at the time of an arrest upon the failure or refusal of a chemical test;
- prohibiting or reducing plea bargaining;
- providing a separate or enhanced penalty for child endangerment;
- limitations on happy hours and other alcohol sales practices that promote drinking;
- requiring or authorizing hospital personnel to report blood alcohol content (BAC) test results from drivers involved in crashes:
- mandatory training for those who serve alcoholic beverages;
- sanctions allowing license plates to be impounded or destroyed;
- lowering the allowable BAC for repeat offenders; and

• a victim rights constitutional amendment. 25

MADD has also criticized Montana for having weak laws concerning the use of sobriety checkpoints and ignition interlock devises.²⁶

Other suggestions

Comments published in Montana newspaper articles and editorials have offered the following ideas:

- mandating a vehicle interlock device for six months for first-time DUI offenders;²⁷
- standardized sentencing; 28
- making a DUI a felony before the fourth offense;²⁹
- education campaigns to shift our culture and thinking;³⁰
- ▶ longer sentences; 31 and
- giving judges more discretion and power to impose stiffer sentences in extreme cases.³²

²⁵ Mothers Against Drunk Driving website at http://www.madd.org/Drunk-Driving/Drunk-Driving/laws/State.aspx?state=Montana.

Noelle Straub, "MADD rips Montana, Wyoming", Billings Gazette, November 20, 2007.

²⁷ Missoulian Editorial Staff, "Interlock devices a no-brainer", *Missoulian*, June 29, 2009.

²⁸ Missoulian Editorial Staff, "DUI sentences vary too widely", *Missoulian*, June 22, 2009.

²⁹ Michael Jamison, "DUI foes pushing for cultural shift", *Billings Gazette*, June 3, 2009.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Zachary Franz, "11th DUI has officials questioning how to keep offenders off road", *Great Falls Tribune*, May 22, 2009.

³² Ibid.

Opposing opinions

There are certainly organizations who have different opinions and believe that DUI laws are getting out of control. For example, an organization called Responsibility in DUI Laws (R. I. D. L.) argues that reactionary laws "criminalizing and punishing responsible drinkers is having little if any affect towards curbing drunk driving". R. I. D. L. also cites statistics showing that a person is 28.77 times more likely to be killed in a traffic accident by a sober driver than by an impaired driver. 34

Another organization with opinions opposing some of the positions advocated by MADD or NHTSA is the National Motorists Association (NMA). The NMA states that it "supports drinking and driving regulations based on reasonable standards that differentiate between responsible, reasonable behavior and reckless, dangerous behavior" and that NMA "does not support zero tolerance concepts, nor does it endorse unconstitutional enforcement and judicial procedures that violate motorists' rights." The NMA argues that the statistics used by NHTSA and MADD to justify harsher penalties for those who are not hard core drunk drivers are misleading and do not tell the full or accurate story. An article detailing NMA's positions on specific laws is included in the attachments to this report.

Montana 2009 DUI Legislation

Passed

HB 536 (Malek), which revised ignition interlock device requirements, was the only DUI-related bill during the 2009 Session to be enacted, other than the SJR 39 study bill. According to testimony, the bill simply corrected a loophole or oversight in the current law

³³ Responsibility in DUI Laws, "Has MADD Gone Mad???", broshure posted at http://www.ridl.us/.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ National Motorists Association, "NMA Position on DUI/DWI" at http://www.motorists.org/dui.

³⁶ Ibid.

that did not apply Montana's law concerning interlock devises to all vehicles that the offender may drive.

Introduced, but failed

The following bills related to DUIs were introduced during the 2009 Session, but failed to passe the legislature:

- HB 216 (Menahan) increasing the incarceration time from 13 months to 3 years for an offender convicted of a fourth or subsequent DUI offense;
- HB 376 (J. Taylor) allowing a court on a first or second conviction for an alcoholrelated or drug-related traffic offense to sentence the offender to periodic testing as an alternative to any other sentence;
- ► HB 573 (Pomnichowski) revising the license suspension period for a repeat offender who has been accepted and approved for participation in a drug treatment court; and
- SB 428 (Moss) providing for the admissibility of evidence of similar crimes in DUI cases.

Vetoed

One DUI-related bill was passed, but vetoed, and an override vote failed:

HB 533 (J. Taylor) - adding vehicular homicide while under the influence as a crime for which a youth 16 years of age or older may be charged as an adult in district court.

Drafted, but not introduced

Several other DUI-related bills were requested, but never actually drafted. However, one bill was drafted, but never introduced:

LC0912 (Laslovich) - revising laws relating to alcohol or drug concentration tests; and providing criminal penalties for second or subsequent refusal to submit to an alcohol or drug concentration test.

SJR 39 Study

<u>Overview</u>

SJR 39 was sponsored by Senator Brueggeman and introduced in the waning days of the 2009 Session. It requests a legislative study of "driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs generally" and asks that the study "determine any legislation that might augment current law to reduce the incidence of this crime."³⁷

Committee hearings

During the hearings on SJR 39, proponents included:

- Colonel Mike Tooley, Chief, Montana Highway Patrol;
- Rebecca Sturdevant, nurse and mother of highway patrol officer killed during a pursuit;
- Mark Taylor, Association of Montana Troopers;
- Pam Bucy, Montana Police Protective Association and Montana Association of Chiefs of Police;
- Jim Smith, Montana County Attorneys Association and Montana Sheriffs' and Peace Officers' Association;
- Don Judge, Montana Nurses Association; and
- Jacqueline Lenmark, American Insurance Association and American Council of Life Insurers.

Some of the proponents stated that Montana's laws were complex, overlapping, and sometimes confusing and suggested that the study also examine how these statute could be clarified.

³⁷ Senate Joint Resolution No. 29, 2009 Session, Montana Legislative Branch, www.leg.mt.gov.

There were no opponents or informational witnesses.³⁸

Floor action

The resolution passed the Senate Judiciary Committee by a vote of 12-0, the full Senate by a third reading vote of 44 to 5, the House Judiciary Committee by a vote of 11 to 7, and the full House by a third reading vote of 63 to 37.³⁹

Ranking compared to other studies

In the post-session poll asking legislators to rank the study resolutions in order of priority, SJR 39 ranked 4th out of the 17 study resolutions included in the poll. 40

Study objectives and tasks

The following chart summarizes the study objectives outlined in SJR 29 and provides a list of proposed committee and staff tasks associated with each stated objective.

³⁸ Montana Senate, *Minutes*, Senate Judiciary Committee, February 20, 2009; and Montana House of Representatives, *Minutes*, House Judiciary Committee, March 18, 2009.

³⁹ Montana Legislative Branch, LAWS, Detailed Bill Information, www.leg.mt.gov, for SJR 29, 2009 Regular Session.

⁴⁰ See Bohyer, Dave, "Summary of the 2009-2010 Interim Study Poll", *The Interim*, June 2009, pg. 16.

| SJR 39 Language | Committee Tasks/Options | Staff Task/Options |
|---|---|---|
| (1) identify strengths and weaknesses in Montana's current DUI statutes. | Adopt policy priorities and instruct staff. Conduct panel discussions on policy priorities, refine priorities Review staff paper analyzing current law against identified priorities. | Based on committee policy priorities: • present summary and staff analysis of current law. • Coordinate panel discussions. |
| (2) examine laws and enforcement practices in other states, including license suspensions, technology, and available resources. | Adopt policy priorities and instruct staff. Review a staff paper on other state laws. Invite testimony from out-of-state experts, if desired. | Based on committee policy priorities: • Prepare and present a research paper on other states. • Coordinate expert testimony. |
| (3) examine Montana's current rates of incarceration due to DUI convictions, current incarceration and treatment capacities, and possible alternatives. | Review data provided by Department of Corrections and other agencies. Receive and consider testimony of the various stakeholders. Provide guidance to staff on types of alternatives to be explored. Review staff paper analyzing various alternatives. Consider fiscal implications of selected options and any preliminary recommendations. | Request data from DOC and other relevant agencies. Coordinate stakeholder testimony. Provide issues and options paper analyzing possible alternatives, including statutory changes. Prepare decision tools. Draft bills to enact any recommendations requiring legislation. Request fiscal analysis of associated costs. |

| SJR 39 Language | Committee Tasks/Options | Staff Task/Options |
|--|---|--|
| (4) analyze whether there is a cultural acceptance of driving under the influence and, if so, what may address this. | Review research. Consider options. Develop recommendations. | Coordinate and/or present research. Develop options. Develop decisions tools. Request fiscal analysis of associated costs. Draft any bills to enact recommendations. |

Study plan decisions

The study contemplated in SJR 39 is comprehensive. Unless study objectives are focused on specific priorities, the study could prove unmanageable. Thus, in making its study plan decisions, the LJIC's should discuss and answer the following threshold questions:

THRESHOLD QUESTIONS:

- (1) What specific areas of Montana's DUI laws are committee members most interested in examining and perhaps revising: offenses and penalties; treatment and diversion programs; courts and court processes, including DUI courts; public education and cultural change programs; vehicle sanctions and ignition interlock devices; records management and data sharing among agencies; retailer and server incentives or training; law enforcement activities, such as sobriety checks; others?
- (2) Does the committee want to consider a general revision bill to clarify current statutes? Note: Drafting a general revision bill will be a time-consuming and complex undertaking and would affect the amount of time available for the listed study tasks.

Clearly, the more time the committee decides to devote to this SJR 39 study, the less time can be devoted to the committee's other study (SJR 29 - study retention of DNA evidence), the committee's statutory duties, and any member or emerging issues.

ATTACHMENTS FOR REFERENCE & SUGGESTED READING

- 1. SJR 39 from the 2009 Session.
- 2. TABLE 1: Montana DUI laws generally.
- 3. Various documents offering state-by-state comparisons of DUI laws.
- 4. Newspaper articles discussion policy issues and legislative history of DUI laws in Montana:
 - Zachary Franz, "11th DUI has officials questioning how to keep offenders off road", Great Falls Tribune, May 22 2009.
 - Editorial Staff, "DUI sentences vary too widely", *Missoulian*, June 22, 2009.
- 5. Research briefs from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) offering state-by-state statistical analysis.
- 6. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), "State Progress Report", 2007.
- 7. Selected state-by-state maps and charts from The Century Council's "State of Drunk Driving Fatalities in America", 2007.
- 8. Montana State Highway Traffic Safety Bureau, graph of the number of alcohol-related crashes in Montana since 1982.
- 9. The National Motorists Association (NMA) position statement opposing certain DUI laws and explaining the NMA position on certain policy approaches.

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