

Law & Courts

Chris Davis Campaigns for Harsher Sentencing of Drunken Drivers - and He's an Attorney

By Rick Anderson, Seattle Weekly
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What you typically hear from attorneys who handle DUI cases is that their clients get too much time for drunk driving. That was what the defenders of state DUI King Robert Castle said for decades as he racked up 16 dee-wees - until some fed-up judges finally took him off the road. But Seattle attorney Chris Davis wants not only stiffer fines and sentences handed down, his firm gives \$500 to **Mother's Against Drunk Driving** for every DUI case it wins.



Davis, it turns out, represents the victims of drunk drivers - clients who were injured or their loved ones killed in vehicle crashes. He sends along his latest newsletter outlining his proposals for increasing DUI penalties. Among them:

-Harsher sentences: A first-time offender would get at least seven days (rather than one) in jail if convicted, and a \$1000 fine, non-negotiable. Second-time offenders: a year and a \$5,000 fine and two-year loss of license. Third-timers: no less than two years, \$12,000 fine and three-year loss of license. Stiffer penalties are more likely to deter drivers from becoming increasingly dangerous repeat offenders, says Davis.

-Enforce minimums: Most drunk drivers who kill someone face vehicular homicide charges, carrying a potential sentence of 15 years to life. But very few of those cases actually go to trial, says Davis. "Instead, most accept plea bargains and serve no more than three years." He suggests a minimum sentence of at least five years.

He'd also like to see DUI tipsters rewarded - \$50 or \$100 worth of compensation - to make people more vigilant about drunk drivers. It could be costly if every one is reported: In Washington last year, 40,205 DUIs were given out. But "if one life is saved, the program has worked," says Davis.

