



Bridgeton News

Bill will strengthen Michael's Law

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TRENTON -- Legislation sponsored by Assemblymen Nelson Albano and Jeff Van Drew to strengthen Michael's Law has been passed by the General Assembly

"The intent of Michael's Law has always been to keep repeat drunk drivers out of their cars and behind bars," said Albano. "This measure would preserve that intent by closing a loophole that allowed lawyers defending repeat drunk drivers to get their clients out of serving mandatory jail time, either through parole or time off for good behavior."

Michael's Law was designed to treat third and subsequent drunk driving offenses in a manner that would properly penalize offenders and encourage them to seek treatment for the underlying cause of their problems. Albano believes that the threat of imprisonment without parole would help achieve this goal.

The Albano/Van Drew measure, A-2025, ensures that third and subsequent repeat drunk drivers sentenced to jail time under Michael's Law are not eligible for parole.

The law was authored in memory of Assemblyman Albano's son, Michael, who was killed in December 2001 by a drunk driver who had four previous drunken driving convictions.

"As with any new law, you occasionally have to go back and make adjustments to ensure that the law is operating in the spirit it was authored," said Van Drew, the original sponsor of Michael's Law. "This small change will keep repeat offenders off our roads and, hopefully, force them to get the help they need."

Albano said the law will help us to better protect New Jersey drivers from the tragedy of losing a loved one.

"Having lost my son to a drunk driver, I am all too familiar with the pain, anger and hurt such a tragedy causes," Albano said. "If, as legislators, we can spare even one family that, it will all have been worth it."

The measure, Albano's first piece of legislation, was approved 77 to 0. It now heads to the Senate for further consideration.

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