

## If Drunk Drivers Were Treated like Sex Offenders...



*Nobody likes sex offenders. People aren't very fond of drunk drivers, either. In fact drunk drivers are much more likely to offend again, and kill or injure far more people each year than sex offenders. But no matter how egregious the crime, both groups are entitled to the same rights under the law. In particular, after they complete their punishment, they should be **DONE** and able to start over. If they offend again, then the punishment should be swifter and more harsh. Their families, **especially** their children, should not be harrassed simply for living with a former offender. This is what we, as Americans, expect from our legal system and from each other. This satirical analogy is intended to show just how far from those expectations our government's treatment of sex offenders has become. Hopefully you will agree that this "fake history" is absurd, unconstitutional, and would cause much more harm than good. Unfortunately, it has direct parallels to what has really been happening to sex offenders.*

## **If Drunk Drivers Were Treated like Sex Offenders...**

### **2001**

*You are caught running a red light. The policeman who pulls you over discovers you've been drinking, and arrests you for drunk driving. The judge sentences you to a \$1000 fine and 60 days in jail. Recognizing your drinking problem, you participate in a treatment program, join AA, and never drink again, let alone drink and drive.*

### **2005**

Drunk driving tragedies have been in the news a lot recently, and the public wants to toughen up on drunk drivers. A law is passed requiring anyone convicted of drunk driving after the year 2000 to be put on a non-public registry for five years from the date of their conviction. The registry exists so if there are any hit-and-run accidents, the police know who to check out as suspects first.

*You are now required to report to the police station once a year to give them your address, driver's license number, license plate numbers, and vehicle descriptions. You must report any changes in information within five days. If you fail to report, you can expect two years of incarceration on a felony charge. Reporting was demoralizing and embarrassing. Thank goodness you only have to do this for one year!*

### **2007**

As a reaction to an especially messy drunk driving incident that got many people up in arms, everyone convicted of drunk driving after the year 2000 is restricted from living within 1000 feet of the nearest bar or store which sells alcoholic beverages. Your state legislature also decides that its RDDs (registered drunk drivers) will need to be on the police registry for ten years from the date of their conviction. This takes a big bite out of the state budget, so RDDs are expected to pay \$500 per year to offset the cost.

*Your house is within range of two liquor stores. You have to move far out of town, forcing you and your wife to find new jobs. It's a scramble, and Santa isn't as generous this year. Your children, who had to change schools mid-year, are not happy. And now you are stuck on that registry until 2011!*

### **Early 2008**

The national government has imposed a minimum sentence of two

years in prison for any drunk-driving charge, and a maximum of ten years if there has been damage to property or personal injury. Failure to register now carries a stiffer penalty of five years in prison, with no parole in either situation. RDDs originally convicted of personal injury incidents must now re-register four times a year, at a cost of \$250 per visit. Failure to register carries the same penalty as a new offense.

*Your family celebrates the fact that this time, the changes do not affect you. But it is cold comfort. You live in a small town, and people sometimes harrass you when you are out with the family.*

### **Mid-2008**

Thanks to politicians who all want to show they are tough on Drunk Drivers, living restrictions are expanded to include any place where people congregate to drink. All RDD-owned vehicles must have pink license plates so others will know that a drunk driver might be behind the wheel. Another federal law forbids any current RDD from owning certain types of vehicles. No studies have actually confirmed this, but it is believed that people who own these vehicles are more likely to drive while intoxicated.

*You own one of these restricted vehicles. You are allowed a month to sell it or face a felony charge and two years' incarceration. You lose a lot of money in the process, and can only afford to buy a clunker. You also have to move again, because there is a Kiwanis Club just over the hill. The only place that qualifies is a run-down trailer park filled with other RDDs. Your kids and wife are frequently harassed by schoolmates and neighbors whenever they drive anywhere, and the car is often vandalized. The kids are regularly getting into fights at school, and your oldest shows signs of serious depression.*

### **Early 2009**

Two studies have shown Drunk Driving accounted for nearly \_\_ child deaths last year, and \_\_ serious child injuries. In a rapid response, federal government passes the Cindy Sweet Act, named after a child who became a paraplegic after one such incident, which mandates that all states create a public, web-based registry listing ANYONE who has had ANY type of alcohol-related conviction since the year 2000. This registry includes the RDD's home and work addresses, his/her photograph, description of his/her vehicle and of course the vehicle license plate number. RDD's that have been convicted of personal injury charges must install breathalyzers, at their cost, into each

vehicle they drive, that send radio reports back to their local police station for monitoring. A positive breathalyzer is grounds for immediate arrest.

*You lose your job because your employer refuses to be listed on the registry, and nobody else will hire you in spite of your excellent employment history. The road to the trailer park is lined with signs like "Baby Killers Ahead" and "Beware! Child Murderers!" Others are much cruder. Your eldest tries to commit suicide, and is placed in a treatment center. Unable to take any more of this, your spouse packs up the younger kids and moves out, with your blessing. You move into a two-bedroom trailer with five other RDDs, to conserve what little money you all manage to earn from odd jobs. Interestingly, not one of your trailer-mates have ever even driven drunk. But they all get the same treatment.*

## **2010**

Penalties for new offenses, and for failing to register, have doubled. RDDs are no longer allowed to drive on the interstate, for public safety reasons. The breathalyzer-and-license-plate requirements are expanded to include any vehicles owned by family members, because the RDD might have access to them. Also, all these vehicles must have a GPS installed for law enforcement to track whether it is safely parked in your driveway or parking lot between 6 p.m. and 5 a.m., since those are the hours most bars are open.

*The new requirements have caused you and most of your trailer-mates to lose what little income you make, because you had night jobs. In desperation, everyone chips in to buy two bottles of good rum – the first drink any of you have had since your convictions. Passing around the bottles, you all get roaring drunk, climb into your breathalyzer-enhanced vehicles, turn on the engines, and wait. Within minutes, police arrive and take all of you into custody. You are guaranteed to be in prison for five years or more. But at least you are warm, and dry, and have steady jobs.*