

LR249
Interim study to examine the impact of recidivism rates
of persons convicted of driving under the influence

Judiciary Committee of the Nebraska Legislature
Interim Hearing
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Comments by
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I am Jim Stimpson, an associate professor with the UNMC College of Public Health,
Department of Health Services Research & Administration. I am here speaking for myself.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, motor vehicle crashes claim more than 30,000 lives in the United States every year, which amounts to one death every 48 minutes. Motor vehicle deaths have an immediate impact on numerous social systems, including families, employers, and communities, with an estimated annual cost exceeding \$41 billion.

In Nebraska, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury death, and the second leading cause of injury-related hospitalization. More than a fourth of all motor vehicle deaths involved at least one alcohol-impaired driver. Younger drivers have the highest likelihood of being involved in an alcohol-related crash. Among Nebraska youth, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of injury death, and the fourth leading cause of injury-related hospital visits.

The research indicates that attempts to solve the problem of impaired driving should carefully consider options at various levels of prevention.

Primary prevention efforts focus on reducing drinking levels, particularly on preventing persons from getting drunk in public, and have the strongest relationship with preventing impaired driving behavior. The focus of primary prevention efforts is on reducing consumption of alcohol through excise taxes and monitoring alcohol serving and sales practices.

Secondary prevention efforts focus on reducing the likelihood that a person who is intoxicated drives a vehicle. The research indicates this effort is less effective than primary prevention efforts because the person is already intoxicated. The focus of secondary prevention efforts is on increasing the perceived risk of DUI enforcement and providing alternative means of transportation home such as public transit, designated drivers, or free cab rides.

Finally, tertiary prevention efforts focus on persons who are driving while intoxicated, which research shows has the least impact on preventing alcohol-related crashes. Tertiary prevention efforts focus on arresting offenders, punishing offenders, and providing drug and alcohol treatment.

To move to the next step in addressing the problem of impaired driving, Nebraska could consider enacting policies that focus on primary and secondary prevention efforts. Primary prevention policies that could be expanded are improved training and monitoring of individuals involved in the sale of alcohol and increased excise taxes on alcohol. Both of these efforts can significantly reduce the consumption of alcohol, particularly among younger adults,

according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, and the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

Secondary prevention policies should focus on increasing the perceived and actual risk of getting caught driving drunk, which can lead to fewer crashes, especially among younger adults. The most effective efforts that are being used in other states include expanding the frequency and visibility of sobriety checkpoints, increasing police patrols, and creating mass media campaigns that advertise the risks of drunk driving and the heightened risk of getting caught. Policies geared toward reducing impaired driving have been particularly effective in other states when coupled with improving access to alternative methods of transportation so that intoxicated citizens have options to get home safely and with less risk of endangering the public.

Thank you for this opportunity.