

Drunk Driving is a serious crime. It is more than an accident due to irresponsible use of alcohol and driving. Drunk driving kills innocent people, young and old. Peoples' futures are lost and their families are left to suffer and mourn the loss of their loved one. Over the years there have been stricter consequences and laws put into effect to stop drunk driving. However, there are still far too many deaths due to driving while impaired. .What actions need to be taken to prevent drunk driving? There needs to be something that puts an end to this problem for good. This includes strict laws with extreme consequences and programs to inform the public of tragedies caused by drunk driving.

Drunk driving is a plague on society. It has existed for a long time. In the year 1980 there were 28,000 people killed due to drunk driving (CQ). Even though the numbers have decreased, in 1999 15,786 people died in alcohol related crashes (CQ). In 2001 the number of deaths raised slightly to 16,652 people. However, that 513,000 . people were also injured due to drunk driving. That means 59 people are affected per hour by alcohol related crashes (NHTSA). That isn't counting the family and friends of the people who died. Alcohol related crashes cost the public 114.7 billion dollars annually which is a cost of about 80 cents per drink. The numbers are tremendous many people are unaware of this tragedy that affects so many lives. At first, people were not concerned but also uneducated. In 1970, the first major federal initiative against drunk driving began (CQ). The government had little funds to enforce anti drunken driving strategies. It was unfortunate that the public was so ignorant of the consequences of driving while intoxicated, and only started to realize the consequences after these tragedy had occurred. Thankfully, more and more people that have been affected, the more drunk driving victim groups have formed. These groups helped sway the public opinion. Out of the general public driving age, 97% saw drinking and driving a threat to their safety. However only 66% felt it's extremely important to reduce the problem (Gallup organization 2003). Some people are ignorant and stubborn. They don't even realize what alcohol does to the body. People think drinking is cool. "Drinking has been traditionally considered a masculine activity and area of expertise. In many societies and in many areas, the two fisted drinker has been the embodiment of the strong male, the mans man." Also Alcohol can make people do things they normally wouldn't do. It impairs their judgment and their reaction time. People under the influence of alcohol tend to be aggressive and have problems with their motor skills (Friends You Can Drop). Alcohol is closely linked with violence. 40 % of crimes are alcohol induced (BJS). Another negative aspect to drunk driving is that people who drive under the influence of alcohol are attracted to lights while driving which in turn makes them hit other cars. The rate of alcohol involvement in fatal crashes at night time is three times as high as during the day: For every crash it is five times more likely to happen at night time (NHTSA). Also, beer is the most common alcoholic drink and the most common drink in cases of drunk driving. It is obvious that drinking and driving is a horrible mix. There are a few ways that we can attempt to put an end to this.

One policy dealing with the problem of drunk driving is a program called Sober

Ride. Sober Ride is a community based effort with a goal to educate people of the dangers of driving while intoxicated. The main objective of the Sober Ride program is to make people aware of other more responsible choices when they are drinking. It provides a safe alternative of transportation other than driving drunk. In 2002 it provided 4,000 safe rides home to people who were drunk. Taxi cab companies are the coordinators of the program and serve as a dispatch center for the program. The rides are free due to funding and donations of various sources and the rides are provided on demand on certain times of the year and different hours (SR). Deputy Wheeler explained that any program to keep people from driving drunk is a good one. To prevent the situation all together is best (RW). However, this program doesn't stop the misuse and irresponsible use of alcohol. People will still continue to drink and if they are too drunk they might possibly forget about the Sober Ride program.

Another rapidly growing policy for drunk driving is to prevent it before it even happens by educating the public. There are programs such as NCADD and MADD. NCADD is the National Commission Against Drunk Driving. It is a coalition of public and private sector organizations. They work to reduce impaired driving. The president of the United States is part of this commission. Presidents since 1981 have set up December as National Drunk and Drugged Driving or 3D for a prevention month for public awareness (NCADD). MADD is Mothers Against Drunk Driving and was founded in Sacramento, California in 1980. Maureen Fisher Ricardella who is the head of the New York City chapter said, "These drunken drivers are using their cars as weapons and are causing a tremendous amount of carnage on our streets and highways"(CQ). MADD is another organization that puts effort into educating the public about drunk driving. Deputy Wheeler favored this idea the most. He said that education is the most efficient method to stop drunk driving because it prevents it before it happens. He has witnessed drunk driving accidents and he said it was "sad because it could've been prevented" and he also said it was "senseless." Also, more people would be educated and know the consequences of their actions. The more people know the less it will occur (RW). The negative side of this policy is that not everyone is hearing this information. This policy only provides education and doesn't enforce the consequences of drunk driving.

The third policy is dealing with the consequences of drunk driving. This is the enforcing policy. People need to be severely punished for this irresponsible crime. In a normal DWI or DUI case the person will get their license taken away and suspended for at least six months along with a fine. For second offenders the mandatory suspension is at least one year (NCADD). This isn't enough though. Mayor Guiliani commented on his "get tough" policy by saying "we wanted to do everything we possibly could to make people think a second, third, fourth, or fifth time before getting behind the wheel of a car." His goal was to convince people that driving while intoxicated "is a grave, grave error and crime" (RG). To add on to the penalty of license suspension and fine, authorities have started to confiscate cars of drunk drivers. Since February of 1999 New York City has confiscated drunk drivers cars. New York and twenty other states have confiscated drunk drivers cars who were second offenders. However, now places are

starting to confiscate first offender's cars. 1,458 cars were confiscated in New York City on the first year. Also, some states have lowered the blood alcohol content or BAC to .08 to reduce drunk driving even more. This policy is good because it gives the repercussions of drunk driving and makes them so severe that people won't drink and drive. However, people don't always think about the consequences and still may drive drunk. That's the only negative part of the policy but it's not a fault in the policy, it's a fault in human nature.

I believe the best policy for drunk driving is a combination of education and stricter consequences. When people are more aware and educated about drunk driving it will help prevent a drunk driving incident from even happening. That, combined with such harsh consequences, people may think twice about driving drunk. Other punishments such as confiscating cars, suspending license, fines, and jail are all things that deter people from driving drunk. Drunk driving is a serious crime and should be put to an end. It takes away innocent lives and is a true tragedy. The best way to do this is to educate the public beforehand and place harsh punishments on those who disobey the law.