

Proposed Washington bill strengthens DUI penalties

Washington residents already know that a DUI comes with serious consequences. According to The Seattle Times, DUI penalties in the state may soon become stricter, making the effects of a DUI charge even more severe.

Proposed bill makes a fourth DUI conviction a felony

The Washington State Senate recently approved a bill that includes fundamental changes to the state's current DUI laws. One of the most significant changes is a provision that classifies a fourth DUI conviction, rather than the fifth, as a felony.

The bill also adds 10 days to all minimum jail sentences for a DUI. It also includes changes regarding ignition interlock devices. Vehicles with an IID installed do not start if the driver is drunk.

Currently, individuals convicted of a DUI are required to install an IID. Under the bill, repeat DUI offenders will not be released from jail until an IID device is installed in their vehicle. Other provisions in the bill that can potentially affect

individuals accused of a DUI include an expansion of DUI courts and a prohibition on deferred sentencing in DUI cases.

Penalties for a first DUI conviction already have substantial effects

According to the governor, the modifications in the bill were inspired by a significant number of recent fatal accidents in the state caused by impaired driving. The Washington Traffic Safety Commission defines impaired driving as driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Additionally, a driver who drives with a blood alcohol limit at or above the legal limit of 0.08 percent is considered an impaired driver.

Even without the bill's modifications, DUI penalties in Washington are already serious. Penalties for a first DUI conviction currently include the following:

- A fine of up to \$5,000
- A potential jail sentence of up to one year
- A license suspension and/or revocation

Additionally, as previously mentioned, all individuals convicted of a DUI are required to install an IID. An individual is responsible for the cost of the device, which can cost over \$1,000 for each year the device is required. The cost of car insurance also typically increases with a DUI conviction. Insurance rates

may rise anywhere between 30 and 100 percent, according to the Washington Traffic Safety Commission.

Due to the devastating consequences of a DUI conviction, anyone accused of a DUI should immediately consult an experienced DUI attorney. A qualified attorney can ensure all rights are effectively asserted to ensure the best possible outcome.