



# DAVIS LAW GROUP News

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## Changes Need to be Made to Washington's DUI and Vehicular Homicide Policy

Considering the month of June has been titled "National Safety Month" by the National Safety Commission, it appears that drivers within Washington State; specifically Seattle, Renton, and Bellevue, have missed the memo. In June it seemed that there were at least two or three new motor vehicle accidents caused by drunk drivers each week, with many more that weren't making the news or causing injuries. With the multiple DUI accidents that have taken place lately, one must look for an explanation as to why Seattle is experiencing this spike in alcohol-related automobile accident and fatalities. One possibility could be how lax the consequences are for DUI arrests and vehicular homicides.

In 2008, there were 37,261 people killed in car accidents in the United States. 11,773 of those deaths involved drivers with Blood Alcohol Concentration above the legal limit of .08. This number is astonishingly low when you consider that in Washington State alone, there were 40,205 DUIs given out last year, and a total of 521 deaths. With DUIs being handed out in such high numbers,

changes need to be made in state policy, specifically to the policies that govern such egregiously reckless behavior like drinking and driving.

If I were to ask you what the average consequence of killing someone while driving intoxicated is in Washington State, what would you say? 10 years in prison? 15 years? The reality is that the average sentence for vehicular homicide, after the defendant accepts a plea bargain in Washington State, is rarely above three years. Considering an innocent human being was killed because of the defendant's horrific decision, three years seems like getting off easy. For example, Darrell Ross of Olympia accepted a plea agreement for killing a blameless 14 year old boy from Graham while driving drunk, and his 2 year and 7 month sentence was actually on par with the average sentence. That is unacceptable.

Earlier this week, Ken Shram of Komo 4 News, called for more serious consequences for getting a DUI, specifically if you are a repeat offender. Statistics

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## My Old Kentucky Home: Davis' Do The Derby

Davis Law Group founder Chris Davis, his wife Michelle and son Jackson took a trip to Kentucky this spring to visit Michelle's childhood home and to attend the 136th running of the **Kentucky Derby**. This was Chris' first trip to Kentucky and Michelle made sure that he had the chance to really soak up the history and culture of the commonwealth. Being a huge

history buff and fan of Abraham Lincoln (who was also an attorney and once handled a lawsuit in which one of Michelle's ancestors was a party), Chris wanted to make sure that he got to visit **Lincoln's birthplace** in Hodgenville, KY. They also visited impressive **Mammoth Cave National Park**, the world's longest known cave system. The family spent an entire day visiting horse farms

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# Gone To The Dogs!

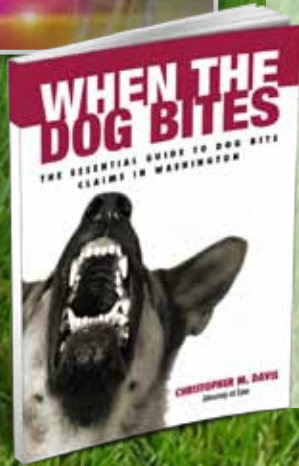


## Chris Davis Featured in Super Lawyers Magazine!



Better  
NORTHWEST

## & Appeared on Better NORTHWEST to Discuss His Book...



## Amazing Auto Woman

by Chris Davis

My wife Mischelle and I recently purchased a car through Heidi Hough, better known as the **Amazing Autowoman**. Heidi is an independent car buyer agent, and she handles every aspect of the purchasing process. With our business at the Davis Law Group demanding our undivided attention, we didn't have time to deal with the research and negotiations involved in finding the right new car for us. Instead, we enlisted Heidi's help. She used her 25 years of industry expertise to provide us with one of the most painless and enjoyable auto-purchasing experiences we have ever had, and would highly recommend the Amazing Autowoman's services.



Looking for a new/used car?  
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## Should Your Company Participate in 'Take Your Dog To Work Day'?

**National Take Your Dog To Work Day** is intended to promote how dogs can reduce workplace stress, boost morale and staff productivity. But having dogs in the workplace or office environment creates serious liability issues for the business owners, dog owners, and building owners that choose to participate. If a company allows employees to bring dogs to work and one of those dogs attacks a customer or another employee, the company and even the building owner can be held liable and required to pay medical bills and other damages.

Dog-friendly policies that allow employees to bring well-behaved pets to work are popping up in many offices. Recent survey by the American Pet Products Association Manufacturers found that 20% of companies now have pet-friendly policies (though experts believe most are very small businesses).

Most dogs do not have enough training to be consistently trusted to behave in a busy workplace environment. And sadly most dog owners do not take full responsibility for making sure that their dog is properly trained, etc. There are also health and safety issues: some workplaces, such as restaurants, grocery stores, etc., clearly are not suitable for dogs.

If you've been bitten by an 'office dog' at your place of work or in a business where you were a customer, contact dog bite attorney Chris Davis at the Davis Law Group.





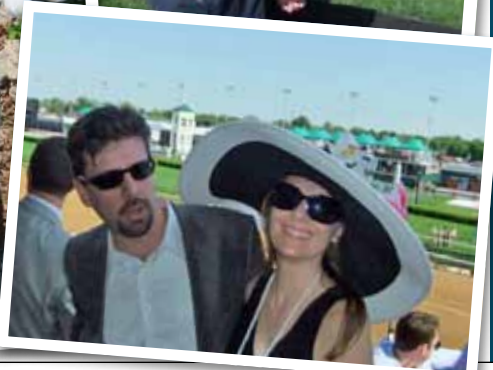


## Derby Continued

they were able to get up close with **2005 Derby winner Giacomo** (see picture of Chris with the impressive stallion) and little Jackson got the chance to visit with some of this season's new foals. They also visited the **Buffalo Trace Distillery** where they were educated on the finer points of Kentucky straight bourbon whiskey. And throughout the trip everyone enjoyed the marvelous Southern cooking including biscuits and gravy, grits, hot-browns, Derby pie, and, of course, the obligatory Mint Julep.

One of the high points of the trip was **Barnstable-Brown Kentucky Derby Eve Gala** that benefits the Diabetes and Obesity Center at the University of Kentucky. This private party is held in the home of Patricia Barnstable (one of the famous Doublemint Twins) and was attended by such notables as actress Diane Lane, the four surviving members of the Jackson 5, Robert Kennedy Jr., Smokey Robinson, Travis Tritt, Terry O'Quinn (Locke from the TV show Lost), Nick Lachey, Barry Bonds, and many more.

In case you are wondering...no they did not have a bet placed on the Derby winner Super Saver. They'll have to go to the Derby another year and try again. 🐾



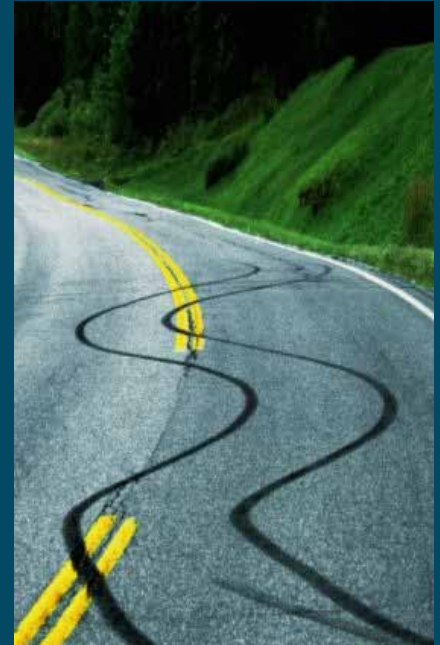
## Changes in DUI Policy Continued

on DUIs have been recorded since 1982, and repeat offenders are the group of people that have made the least amount of progress in terms of lowering alcohol-related accidents and deaths.

So what changes would Davis Law Group make in hopes of lowering the number of arrests, automobile accidents and related fatalities where alcohol was involved? There are three things we would address:

### 1. Exponentially Raise DUI Consequences

The best way to eliminate the DUI repeat offenders is to try to eliminate the number of first time offenders. So, by increasing the consequence for a first time DUI arrest to at least 7 days in jail and a \$1000 fine, non-negotiable, those who may normally risk driving after drinking will reconsider. For second time offenders, 1 year in jail, \$5,000 fine and a 2 year loss of license. Finally, for third time offenders, no less than 2 years in prison, \$12,000 fine and a 3 year loss of license. Those are serious consequences that few would be willing to risk simply to get somewhere faster.



### 2. Enforce Minimum Prison Sentence for Plea Bargains

In Washington State, a majority of drunk drivers who kill someone as a result of their inability to operate a vehicle safely are charged with vehicular homicide, which carries a potential sentence of 15 years to life in prison if convicted. However, very few of those cases actually go to trial. Instead, most accept plea bargains and serve no more than three years. That is not good enough considering an innocent person is dead. There needs to be a policy put in place that establishes a minimum sentence. Serving one or two years in prison is simply not good enough. We would suggest a minimum sentence of at least five years.

### 3. Offer Rewards for Anyone who Reports A Drunk Driver

Nothing promotes action quite as effectively as a reward. Washington State needs to offer a reward for anyone who reports a drunk driver, but the rewards need to be worthwhile enough to get people to act. Getting a \$5 gift certificate to Starbucks will not make a difference. There need to be \$50 or \$100 worth of compensation that will inevitably make people more vigilant of drunk drivers. While it's unsure such a rewards program would actually reduce the number of drunk drivers on the road, we'll never know until we try. As far as the Davis Law Group is concerned, if one life is saved, the program has worked.

Overall, Washington State needs to make serious changes to its handling of DUI cases. There is simply not enough to deter the general public from drinking and driving. By making three major changes-- increasing the consequences for first, second and third time DUI offenders, enforcing a minimum sentence for plea bargains, and offering rewards for people who report drunken drivers-- we could make a dent in the number of alcohol-related car accidents and subsequent fatalities each year. 🐾



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## Davis Law Group To Donate \$500 To MADD For Every Drunk Driving Injury Accident Case Settled



Attorney Chris Davis is announcing that Davis Law Group will donate \$500 to **Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)** for every drunk driving injury accident case that the firm settles or takes to verdict. Davis Law Group frequently represents people who have been injured in drunk-driving accidents in the state of Washington.

Although both nationally and in Washington state drunk driving accidents and fatalities are down overall, driving while intoxicated is still a huge problem. The drunken driving injury and related wrongful death cases that our firm handles are heart-wrenching and the staff takes a particular interest in helping these clients get justice. In 2008, 255 people in Washington State lost their lives in alcohol related fatal accidents. One hundred eighty-two (182) of those accidents involved a drunk driver whose blood alcohol concentration (BAC) was 0.08 or higher.

The Davis Law Group staff was so angered by the circumstances of one the more recent drunk driving-related injury cases that they are currently handling. As a result, they started looking for ways to raise awareness about drunk driving in Washington State. When Chris' wife Mischelle learned that donations to organizations such as MADD are down dramatically as a result of the current economic downturn, she proposed to Chris and the office staff that they begin their own MADD fund-raising program. Chris, the paralegals and office staff immediately gave their whole-hearted support for the program.

"As a mother and someone who is close to the personal stories of those who have been touched by a drunk driving tragedy, working to help MADD raise money is very satisfying," said Mischelle Weedman-Davis.

The firm currently handles a number of drunk driving cases in the Seattle area and across Washington state. At the conclusion of these and all future DUI / DWI cases Davis will donate \$500 to Mothers Against Drunk Driving. 