



## SAMPLE OP-ED ARTICLE

### PUBLIC NEEDS TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY FOR DRUNK DRIVING IN [COMMUNITY/STATE]

In the last few years, impaired driving has taken a back seat to other, more high profile health and traffic safety issues. But that hasn't made the problem go away. The fact remains that nearly 16,000 people die as a result of impaired driving each year. Last year, drunk drivers accounted for more than **[LOCAL STATISTICS]** fatalities in **[COMMUNITY]** alone.

This holiday season is a perfect opportunity for the public to become more involved in promoting public safety in **[COMMUNITY/STATE]**. Typically, the winter holiday season is one of the most dangerous times of the year for impaired driving. As celebrations become more prolific, more impaired motorists take to the roads and put the general public's health and safety at risk with their unsafe driving behaviors.

Impaired driving is an issue that no one likes to address, but one which anyone can become a victim. In fact, studies show that one out of every five people will become a victim of drunk driving in their lifetime. The tragedy is that impaired driving is an entirely preventable crime.

Local law enforcement agencies are doing their part. This holiday season, they will be supporting national efforts, such as the National Highway Safety Administration's (NHTSA) impaired driving campaign, *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* and National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, by setting up sobriety checkpoints and conducting saturation patrols and youth sting organizations throughout **[COMMUNITY]** to target impaired drivers and discourage the sale of alcohol to minors. This December 15-17, **[LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY]** will participate along with **[SPONSORING ORGANIZATION]** and **[PARTNERS]** to promote National Holiday Lifesavers Weekend and "Lights on for Life" Day within their communities.

But in order to create a real difference in the way our **[COMMUNITY/STATE]** views impaired driving, we need your help. Impaired driving is not just a problem for the courts or the victims, but it is a problem for all of us. Because when impaired drivers take to the road, they not only put themselves at risk, they put the public's safety in jeopardy. In addition to the physical and emotional damage they inflict as a result of their careless behavior, they place a financial burden on the community, in the form of court costs, emergency services, the repair of public property and more. That's a sizeable amount of money that comes out of your pocket each year when tax season comes around—money that can be better spent.

What can you do to help? First, don't drink and drive. Encourage safe driving behaviors among family, friends and co-workers. You can do this by volunteering to be a designated driver or planning to ride home with a sober driver, or by staying put or using a safe ride such as a taxicab. Many communities have designated driver and safe ride programs where alternative transportation is provided free of cost. If your area does not, think about starting one. And remember to support law enforcement efforts to rid our roadways of impaired drivers. Encourage their continued enforcement of impaired driving laws to protect your family, friends and the community at large.

No one wants to face the New Year with the loss of a loved one. And if we treat impaired driving as the grave problem it is, then hopefully no one will have to. But we can't expect individuals to take responsibility for themselves if the public does not share that responsibility equally, because when you drink and drive, we all lose.

To find out more about national programs like *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* or local efforts, please contact **[LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION]**.