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Stopping the nightmare on Hawaii's streets  
By  
Representative Colleen Meyer

Recent events continue to highlight the need to get tough on those who endanger pedestrians. Today, it was reported in local newspapers that Carl Cornelle, Jr. was given a fourth chance by our state courts. For those who might have missed this, according to reports, he was sentenced to probation for 1<sup>st</sup> degree negligent homicide from the death of Arlene Miske on April 26, 1999 after vowing to stay off drugs or alcohol for the rest of his life. That lifetime vow was broken in 2002 and his probation was revoked, but he was given another five years probation. He was back in court in 2004 for illegal drug use, and received another five year probation sentence. On February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008, he asked Circuit Judge Richard Perkins for probation, and got another five years.

Earlier this year, an elderly pedestrian was killed in Kailua. On the same day that Mr. Cornelle asked Judge Perkins for probation, another elderly pedestrian was fatally injured when a car hit her on Farrington Highway in Ma`ili. And sadly, we can recount many tales over the years of elderly pedestrians being injured and killed by careless motorists and drunk drivers.

Time and again, the legislature has introduced measures in an effort to end this nightmare. This year was no exception. House and Senate Republicans included measures in their Joint Legislative Package to establish an ignition interlock program and to increase the fines and penalties for certain traffic violations and for driving under the influence.

While a measure to establish an ignition interlock program appears to be moving towards a reality, coming down hard on reckless, careless, or drunk drivers does not. This defies all logic and reason.

One of only 5 states without this type of program, an ignition interlock system prevents a driver from starting their vehicle if the driver has alcohol above a predetermined level in their system. Intermittent random testing will force a driver to remain sober while driving.

Such a program could easily co-exist with harsher penalties for those who would choose to drive drunk or under the influence of drugs, those who injure people and flee the scene, and those who would excessively speed. Lives continue to be broken and ended on Hawaii's roadways.

Everybody loses in a traffic fatality, whether it is from driving under the influence or speeding. Hopefully, an ignition interlock system will teach drunk drivers not to drive drunk, and increasing penalties and fines will dissuade drivers from engaging in dangerous driving behaviors, and if it does not, take them off the road.

Recent events clearly show that we've still got a ways to go in ending this nightmare on our streets.