Drunk-Driving Bill Approved

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) — The House Sunday approved a measure to total up the convictions of drunk drivers so they will not escape stiff state law penalties, including up to 30 years in jail, because of a quirk in law.

The measure, sponsored by the state Highway Safety Commission, would require all cases of driving while intoxicated be tried under state law rather than city ordinance.

It would also remove the jurisdiction of mayors' courts from DWI cases.

Rep. Carl Bauer of Franklin, who floor-managed a commission package, said court decisions have held that a conviction for DWI in city courts cannot be added to convictions in state district court to determine the number of offenses.

Remove Jurisdiction

Conviction on a third offense DWI charge is a felony in Louisiana resulting in imprisonment.

"It has been determined that this change is necessary in this serious charge," Bauer said. "When you're number one in killing people on the highways as Louisiana is, it strikes me that intoxicated drivers ought to be called to account."

Jury Trial

The bill was amended to require a jury trial on third offense.

Conviction on third offense requires imprisonment from one to five years. For the fourth offense, the sentence is from 10 to 30 years.

The House also gave approval to bills tightening regulations for motorcycle operators and riders, specifying that operators must wear eye protectors and that passengers must have a seat and footrests.

Another measure forbids trucks to use turn signals to indicate to a trailing vehicle that the road is clear to pass.