Fewer DWI arrests claim disputed

By United Press International

The claim that the state’s tough new drunken driving laws would lead to fewer arrests was disputed Thursday by a State Police spokesman.

Lt. Ronnie Jones said public support for the measure would encourage officers to get more drunks off the road. Drunken driving arrests for 1983 already are up 20 percent, he said, adding officials believe that number will rise.

Jones was responding to an LSU-Shreveport professor’s claims this week that the prospect of spending more time in court on driving while intoxicated cases would deter officers from making arrests.

“Each of our officers for the first time feel a tremendous amount of public support for their role in removing the drunken drivers from the roads,” Jones said.

He said troopers had been frustrated by laws that allowed judges to throw out DWI cases or assess a wide variety of penalties. That frustration had a “chilling effect” on the number of drunken driving arrests, he said.

“The new DWI law has provided a new emphasis for enforcement,” Jones said. “Our troopers feel they’ve been given a mandate by the people of this state, and they intend to carry it out.”

Jones noted State Police troopers are compensated for time spent in court.

additional court time deter them from arresting drunken drivers.

“The prospect of having to spend time in court when a trooper stops a stammering, stumbling drunk on the highway at night is the farthest thing from his mind,” Jones said.

Jones also noted State Police troopers are compensated for time spent in court.