House approves two bills to fund anti-DWI programs

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The Louisiana House voted to tap the politically sensitive public works fund and to levy additional court charges on drunken driving offenses on Wednesday in an attempt to support an anti-drinking program pushed by Gov. Treen.

House leaders resorted to the raid on the $27 million local drainage and road fund after realizing they were short of votes to raise liquor and beer permits.

Rep. Kevin Reilly, D-Baton Rouge, gained approval for use of the public works fund, declaring that the required 70 votes for taxing bars and liquor outlets was not there.

"We have a contract with the people of Louisiana," said Reilly, referring to the anti-drunken driving offensive pushed through the Legislature last summer at Treen's urging.

The bill by Rep. John Alario, D-Westwego, would have raised $3 million by increasing the permits on liquor and beer outlets, but intensive lobbying by beer and liquor interests assured defeat of that funding method.

As approved by the House, the bill takes $3 million from the public works appropriations and establishes a DWI Law Enforcement Fund to provide grants to local governments in the anti-drinking effort. Law enforcement agencies would apply to the Highway Safety Commission to finance specific anti-DWI programs.

The House also approved a related bill by Alario to tack $50 on each DWI conviction with the money to be dispensed by district judges for handling an expected increase in costs coming from the DWI package of bills approved during the 1982 regular session.

The Legislature last year established minimum DWI penalties of two days in jail or four days of public service as well as rehabilitation efforts for first offenders. Stiffer penalties were established for second and third offenders.

Rep. Alario said the increased $50 court fee for DWI convictions would generate $210,000 during the remainder of this year and $840,000 a year in the future.

The House passed the $3 million funding bill by an 88-8 vote and the additional court cost measure 82-11. Both bills were sent to the Senate.

In speaking for the $3 million fund transfer, Reilly said, "If (See DWI, Page 7-A)"