Mandatory DWI Term Proposed In Louisiana

Baton Rouge, La. (AP) — First-time offenders convicted of driving while intoxicated would spend at least two days in jail under a bill pre-filed for the 1982 legislative session.

Rep. Eldridge Morris of DeRidder said the death of a friend’s daughter in a New Year’s Eve accident prompted him to file the legislation.

State law allows for a jail sentence of 30 days to two months for first-time DWI conviction, but most offenders get off with a fine.

Morris’ bill was among seven bills — all from House members — prefiled last week. Legislators began prefile bills last week for 85-day session that begins April 19.

“I think the guy fixing to take the next drink might take a second thought about it if he knew he would have to go to jail, even just for two days,” Morris said.

He said a close friend of his daughter was killed by a drunken driver on New Year’s Eve, and the tragedy convinced him that “something needed to be done.”

Morris noted that Louisiana ranks second in the nation in alcohol-related deaths. About 1,200 persons were killed on state roads last year and state police estimate half were related to drinking drivers.

He said Tennessee recently adopted an almost indental measure.

Among other prefiled bills late last week were ones to:
— Define a fetus, from the moment of conception, as a human being for the purposes of liability in civil suits. The bill was prefiled by Rep. Hunt Downer of Houma.
— Authorize law enforcement officers to retrieve a child kept beyond terms of a custody or visitation order.
— Increase minimum salaries and expense allowances for school bus drivers.

The new prefilings bring to 20 bills introduced for the 1982 session.