

6/3/97



STATE OF MINNESOTA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
130 STATE CAPITOL
SAINT PAUL 55155

ARNE H. CARLSON
GOVERNOR

June 3, 1997

The Honorable Allan Spear
President of the Senate
120 Capitol
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear President Spear:

I have vetoed and am returning Chapter 243, Senate File 985, a bill which would make a number of changes to current DWI statutes.

This bill establishes a troubling and ill-conceived precedent that would impose a higher and, frankly, unfair burden of responsibility on young people. Specifically, it would reduce the legal limit for alcohol concentration while driving or operating motor vehicles, recreational vehicles, military vehicles and airplanes, as well as for hunting. For each of these activities, the level is reduced from .10 to .04 for youth under age 19. Somehow, the legislative discussion of this bill went from a reasonable debate about tougher penalties and a uniform standard of .08 to the unwise adoption of a generationally imbalanced .04 standard.

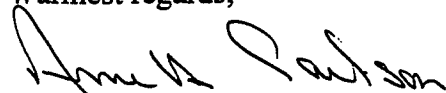
The crime of DWI is caused by all age groups and its consequences are as tragic and disturbing if perpetrated by a high-school student as they are a full-grown adult. Our young people must be held accountable for their actions; however, by placing such a drastic threshold of responsibility (less than half the established legal limit) on youth under age 19, Minnesota's adults will subject their children to the scorn of the proverbial "Scarlet Letter" for a lifetime. This hypocrisy would prevent a young person from attending one of our nation's military academies, while turning a blind eye to a similar crime committed by any other adult. By including this provision in an otherwise sound bill, the Legislature sent a message to young people that like crimes committed by 20-year olds are not as egregious or harmful, solely because the perpetrators are one-year older.

I have always supported tough, fair, and consistent penalties for those that elect to drink irresponsibly and operate motor vehicles, endangering their lives and the lives of others. Many

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of the changes proposed in this bill are fair, reasonable and necessary. It is not sound public policy, however, to enact legislation that subjects one group of citizens to a different set of standards than we would impose upon ourselves.

Warmest regards,



ARNE H. CARLSON
Governor

- c: Senator Roger Moe, Majority Leader
- Senator Dean Johnson, Minority Leader
- Representative Phil Carruthers, Speaker of the House
- Representative Steve Sviggum, Minority Leader
- Chief Senate Author(s)
- Chief House Author(s)
- Mr. Patrick E. Flahaven, Secretary of the Senate
- Mr. Edward A. Burdick, Chief Clerk of the House
- Ms. Joan Anderson Growe, Secretary of State