

House Republican Press Release

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REP. FREY CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE OPEN- CONTAINER LAW FOR STATE



“Would Provide Additional Dollars for Bridge Inspection”

RIDGEFIELD– State Representative John Frey of Ridgefield, today called for the immediate passage of a law prohibiting open containers of alcohol in vehicles when the legislature meets to vote on the Transportation bonding package in the upcoming special session.

Since 2000, Connecticut has had to divert \$45.95 million in federal funds away from highway maintenance programs and into “lower priority safety programs” such as drunken-driving prevention because it has failed to enact a law prohibiting open containers of alcohol in vehicles.

Rep. Frey said, “Most constituents I speak with are shocked that open containers are still permitted in Connecticut. A ban on open containers in vehicles is a small price to pay to make sure our roads and bridges are safe and secure for Connecticut motorists in addition to furthering the message that drinking while driving is not allowed.”

“The open container ban is a common sense proposal that can save lives. There is no need for open containers of alcohol in any vehicle. The public policy of Connecticut should be to discourage residents from drinking and driving,” added Frey.

Representative Frey was a co-sponsor of Senate Bill 272 this past session which would have enacted such a ban. In the final hours of the legislative session, Frey was the leading House Republican in an effort to get the language approved. In the end, the Senate approved the open container ban 33-3 but the House leadership refused to take the issue up.

“After a recent tragedy, such as the Minnesota bridge collapse, the legislature should maximize any federal funds that are available to Connecticut,” said Rep. Frey.

Representative Frey was in Minneapolis attending a meeting of the Republican National Committee at the time and witnessed the bridge minutes after its collapse from the 50th floor of a downtown building. He had traveled over the bridge twice earlier in the day.

"One doesn't need to have seen the failed bridge in person to understand the need to address our aging transportation infrastructure," Rep. Frey said.

The diverted money includes the transfer for this fiscal year of \$5.8 million from construction-related highway projects — including road improvements, bridge repair, and ride-share initiatives — into programs aimed at reducing drunken driving and eliminating road hazards.

The federal government levies the “transfer penalty” against the state because Connecticut is considered non-compliant with federal guidelines requiring states to enact and enforce an open-container law.