

# Carroll County Times

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## Law aims to curb teenage drinking

By Ryan Marshall, Times Staff Writer

A new law increasing fines for providing alcohol to people under the legal drinking age may be the first of several measures attempting to curb teen drinking.

Montgomery County Del. William Bronrott said the bill, which passed in the last legislative session and takes effect Wednesday, is a positive step in the fight to cut off the supply of alcohol to people who are underage.

Under the measure, fines for providing alcohol would increase from \$1,000 for a first offense and \$1,500 for subsequent offenses to \$2,500 and \$5,000, respectively.

Del. Tanya Shewell, R-District 5A, originally proposed the bill. Her original version included possible jail time for those who provided alcohol, but that part of the bill got cut from the version which passed the Senate.

Shewell said she plans to push for jail time in new legislation in future sessions of the General Assembly.

The law is targeted at people who knowingly and willingly provide alcohol to people under the legal drinking age, Shewell said.

Bronrott said he expects the law to serve as a deterrent, keeping adults from giving alcohol to underage people.

Bronrott chairs a House committee on drug and alcohol abuse and said the law is a good beginning for what he would like to see happen in the General Assembly's next session.

One of the measures Bronrott said he would like to see passed would suspend a driver's license for any violation of Maryland's legal drinking age.

A driver's license is often one of a teen's most prized possessions, and the prospect of losing it may make teenagers think twice about drinking, he said.

Bronrott said he'd also like to see penalties imposed for people who deal in or manufacture fake identification cards.

Kurt Erickson, president of the nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program, praised the new law for addressing the supply side of people providing alcohol, rather than the demand side of teens' desiring alcohol, which tends to get addressed more often.

A number of national studies show teens get their alcohol from family, friends or other people rather than buying it themselves surreptitiously at stores, Erickson said.

The increase in fines is likely to get peoples' attention, he said.

"You don't have to be in the current economic climate to think \$2,500 is a significant fine," Erickson said.

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