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### **Senator calls for forfeiture of cars used in DUIs**

by Erin Miller  
*West Hawaii Today*  
[Emiller@Westhawaii.com](mailto:Emiller@Westhawaii.com)

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Sen. Josh Green attempted Tuesday to introduce a floor amendment to a speeding bill incorporating mandatory penalties for people arrested for driving under the influence.

Green, D-North and South Kona, North and South Kohala, said he withdrew the amendment after some discussion, but state House leaders had promised to include the measure -- which requires the immediate forfeiture of a vehicle used while driving under the influence -- in another bill.

"There was emotional support and legislative support," Green said of his amendment. "The state has to punish people who drive drunk."

Hundreds of Kealahou High School students have written to Green's office since the death of senior Angela Apostadiro, 17, Feb. 23, from injuries she suffered in a collision on Queen Kaahumanu Highway. Police charged Joseph Edgar Jr., 21, with negligent homicide and a number additional crimes following the crash. Further investigation revealed Edgar had been arrested in November on DUI charges and was awaiting a court hearing.

Rep. Denny Coffman, D-North Kona, Keauhou, Kailua-Kona and Honokohau, has heard from those students, too. Coffman had already been working on bills to address punishment for drunken drivers, prompted to act by the death of a 17-month-old in a May collision.

He said he was glad to see the state making progress toward implementing the ignition interlock device law that takes effect Jan. 1, but he pointed out that installing such a device only happens after a person has been convicted of a first offense.

"We all have choices," Coffman said. "If the penalties were tougher, people would really take it seriously. Now, when people go into a bar, I think they kid themselves about the impact or how much they can drink."

He acknowledged that making significant changes through the Legislature is a lengthy process.

Imposing stricter, more immediate punishment is the key to stopping drunken driving, Green said. He would like to see forfeiture of any vehicle driven by someone who is drunk, even if the vehicle belongs to someone else.

"You're going to have to explain that to the car's owner," he said. "No excuses. If you take that risk with other people's lives, you have to be ready to handle the consequences."

As legislators continued to debate related bills and amendments, West Hawaii students continued to come to terms with the Apostadiro's death.

Students plan to wave signs from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday along Queen Kaahumanu Highway as part of an awareness campaign. A counselor at the school asked community members with extra bottled water stockpiled in anticipation of Saturday's tsunami to drop off water at the sign-waving location on the highway easement frontage between the highway and the Mormon temple.