

HIGHWAY SAFETY INITIATIVES

Reduce Suspended Drivers and Increase Officers' Proactive Time

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Research estimates that as many as 75 percent of suspended and revoked drivers continue to drive.¹ What if I told you we could reduce the number of suspended drivers on our roads by approximately 40 percent and increase proactive patrol time for state, county, tribal, and local police officers who engage in traffic law enforcement? Does this sound too good to be true? It can be done.

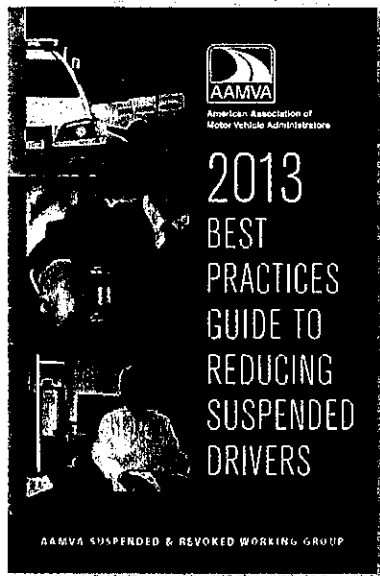
The American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) is a nonprofit organization developing model programs in motor vehicle administration, law enforcement, and highway safety. AAMVA represents state and provincial officials in the United States and Canada who administer and enforce motor vehicle laws.

AAMVA has 10 discipline areas that fall under the auspices of three standing committees: driver, enforcement, and vehicle. The Driver and Vehicle standing committees each has one member representing the IACP's State and Provincial Police Directorate (S&P), while the Enforcement standing committee has nine S&P members. Each standing committee is charged with addressing contemporary issues within its area of oversight through issue-specific working groups.

The most recently released deliverable of AAMVA's Enforcement standing committee was published in February 2013 by the Suspended and Revoked Driver Working Group and titled *2013 Best Practices Guide to Reducing Suspended Drivers* (hereinafter *Best Practices Guide*).

The *Best Practices Guide* includes research that paints the following picture:

- Approximately four out of every ten suspended drivers had their driving privileges suspended for reasons having nothing to do with driving.



- Drivers suspended for driving reasons are three times more likely to be involved in a crash than drivers suspended for non-driving reasons.

Because driving suspensions for social non-conformance (non-driving) reasons have grown so significantly—those non-driving reasons number as many as 74 across the states—the recommendation presented in the *Best Practices Guide* is for states to repeal current laws requiring (or allowing) suspension of driving privileges for non-driving reasons and make license suspension the tool it was originally intended to be—to address poor driving behavior.

If states were to adopt this policy position and repeal the targeted laws, we would realize an approximate 40 percent decrease in suspended drivers. What could that mean to law enforcement? One example is extrapolated from data provided by the Washington State Patrol (WSP). In 2011, WSP troopers issued 22,519 citations for driving while suspended or revoked. Applying the national average of 39 percent of all suspensions being for non-driving reasons, 8,782 of those arrested drivers were suspended for non-highway safety-related reasons. In addition

to roadside citations, many of those cases involved vehicle impoundments, jail bookings, and court appearances for case adjudication—averaging nine total hours spent per case. This represents nearly 80,000 hours that troopers spent dealing with drivers suspended for non-highway safety-related reasons. Eliminating suspensions for social non-conformance issues would allow resources to be better focused on highway safety efforts. This article does not address the additional potential cost and time savings to the courts and to departments of motor vehicles, but those are addressed in the *Best Practices Guide*.

It will take the combined efforts of motor vehicle and law enforcement administrators working in partnership to successfully pass legislation repealing laws requiring or allowing suspensions for non-driving reasons, and there may be resistance. Even if it is not plausible to repeal every targeted law, repealing even some would result in time and cost savings. AAMVA provides some tools to assist in the endeavor:

- The *Best Practices Guide* includes a template that provides the framework for writing jurisdiction-specific legislation.
- AAMVA has produced a short video that features subject matter experts from around the United States to help convince lawmakers, legislative staff, and other stakeholders of the need to adopt this policy position. The video can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUSKhQUW2do>.

For more information about AAMVA and the *Best Practices Guide*, visit <http://www.aamva.org> or contact Brian A. Ursino, director of law enforcement, at bursino@amva.org.

Note:
¹Timothy R. Neuman et al., *National Cooperative Highway Research Program Report 500, Volume 2: A Guide for Addressing Collisions Involving Unlicensed Drivers and Drivers with Suspended or Revoked Licenses* (Washington D.C.: Transportation Research Board, 2003), I-1, http://onlinepubs.trb.org/Onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_500v2.pdf (accessed April 12, 2013).