



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Senator Martins' Legislation Raising Penalties for Unlicensed Drivers Passed by Senate

JACK M. MARTINS May 13, 2014

| ISSUE: **CRIME**

Senator Jack M. Martins (R-7th Senate District) announced that the New York State Senate passed legislation he sponsored to increase penalties for drivers who operate a vehicle without a driver's license. The legislation would address an inequity in current law which allows unlicensed drivers to face lesser penalties than those who drive with a suspended license.

Operating a vehicle with a suspended license is a misdemeanor offense under current law. However, operating a vehicle without a license is only a violation, which is not classified as a crime and carries no possibility of jail time. This means that an unlicensed driver only has to pay a relatively small fine if they are caught and can continue to break the law without any threat of a jail sentence.

Senator Martins' legislation (S4786A) would correct this inequity by making driving without a license a misdemeanor crime. This would create parity with the existing penalty for driving with a suspended license and ensure that unlicensed drivers are held accountable.

"Unlicensed drivers jeopardize the lives and safety of everyone on the road. It's completely absurd that current law prevents an unlicensed driver from facing even the possibility of a

jail sentence for their reckless actions. Raising the penalty for driving without a license to a misdemeanor charge will close this legal loophole which is allowing unlicensed drivers to escape with barely a slap on the wrist,” said Senator Martins.