



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michael Gianaris

## Senator Michael Gianaris Leads Elected Officials and Transit Advocates in Renewed Call to Increase Penalties for Drivers Without Valid Licenses Following Queens Hit-And-Run Death

MICHAEL GIANARIS March 4, 2015

| ISSUE: **TRANSPORTATION**

(Elmhurst, NY) State Senators Michael Gianaris and Toby Ann Stavisky, Assemblymember Francisco Moya, Councilman Danny Dromm, Transportation Alternatives and Make Queens Safer renewed calls for passage of Senator Gianaris's legislation to crack down on drivers who kill or seriously injure others while driving with revoked, suspended or otherwise invalid licenses. This proposal (under Senate bills S2539 and S2484), which is included in Mayor de Blasio's Vision Zero agenda, would make such an event a felony and would provide for the immediate impoundment of a vehicle in an accident like the one that took the life of a pedestrian on Woodside Avenue this Sunday. Assemblywoman Marge Markey carries both bills in the State Assembly.

Senator Gianaris first introduced the legislation after a truck driver without a valid license struck and killed Noshat Nahian, a 3<sup>rd</sup>-grader at PS 152 in Woodside on his way to school on Northern Boulevard in December 2013. Senator Gianaris renewed his call for these measures after Angela Hurtado was killed by a driver with a suspended license in Maspeth in January 2014. This latest incident makes three deaths in similar circumstances in just over a year.

“How many deaths at the hands of unauthorized drivers will it take before we make sure the punishment fits the crime in these cases?” **said Senator Michael Gianaris (D-Queens)**. “It is heartbreaking to see one family after another suffer the loss of a loved one because irresponsible drivers get behind the wheel when they shouldn’t. My proposals would create a serious deterrent so that anyone thinking about getting behind the wheel without a license will think twice or face real jail time if they do so and kill or seriously injure someone. I call on my fellow legislators to pass these bills immediately before we face yet another tragedy.”

“The tragedy that occurred at this intersection two days ago is unfortunately another incident in a long list of preventable traffic deaths. Drivers who have already been deemed reckless and dangerous are still getting behind the wheel, with deadly consequences. I am proud to co-sponsor Senator Gianaris’ legislation and I hope my fellow elected officials join me in supporting these life-saving, commonsense bills,” **said Senator Toby Ann Stavisky (D-Flushing)**.

“After yet another fatal hit and run caused by an unlicensed driver, we must stand up and finally say, ‘enough is enough,’” **said Assemblyman Francisco Moya (D-Jackson Heights)**. “Clearly our current laws are not tough enough if unlicensed drivers can still drive on our streets, putting New Yorkers, especially children and the elderly, in danger. If we had tighter restrictions on unlicensed driving, that driver probably wouldn’t have been on the road in the first place. Tougher penalties are needed to ensure public safety and I commend Senator Gianaris for spearheading the effort to take unlicensed drivers off our streets. Safer streets save lives.”

“This tragic crash makes it clear why we need Senator Gianaris’ legislation to make it a felony to kill or injure someone while driving without a license, or with a license that has been suspended or revoked,” **said Paul Steely White, Executive Director of Transportation Alternatives**. “NYPD

officers were able to charge this hit-and-run driver with operating a vehicle without a license, but the charge in a case like this needs to be felony, since drivers without a valid license are twice as likely to cause fatal crashes. We call on the Senate to bring these two bills to a vote this session.”

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