

Connie's Law

Dear Utah/Montana Legislator,

Today I am reaching out to you about a critical concern to everyone. As you may have heard on the news, Connie Blount, an 18 year old freshman at the University of Kentucky and Park City, Utah resident was murdered by a hit-and-run driver, April 13th as she walked home to her apartment on the campus at the University of Kentucky. This horrible tragedy has brought to light the fact that there were three states in the United States where hit-and-run is a misdemeanor rather than a felony – Kentucky, Utah, and Montana.

Why is this so outrageous? In Connie's tragic case, the driver of the truck that ran her down in a crosswalk is believed to have been drunk. If the driver was drunk, as evidence would suggest, had he stopped he would have been arrested at the scene for vehicular manslaughter, however because he did not stop he was not found for two days and thus he can only be charged with misdemeanor hit-and-run. What this point out is a clear loophole in the law where by a person drunk, on drugs or driving a stolen car, for example, can leave the scene and avoid the serious legal prosecution they deserve. In Connie's case, the driver is also being charged with tampering with evidence because he attempted to get his truck repaired to hide the accident, but this is a far cry from the DUI and manslaughter charges he would have faced otherwise. It is clear this murderer knows what he did as he slowed to a stop after hitting my daughter and then sped away, and then attempted to destroy the evidence. This murderer is a repeat felon and a repeat drunk driver, yet the law is protecting this criminal instead of the victim.

Kentucky, Utah and Montana were the only three states where hit-and-run was not a felony on April 13, 2008. Kentucky has recognized the critical hole in their legal system and both the legislators and the Governor moved quickly and on April 28th the Governor signed a felony hit-and-run law into effect.

I beg you, as a legislator of Utah and/or Montana to not wait for another victim to be killed by a hit-and-run driver to bring our laws into alignment with the rest of the United States and protect the victim not the criminal. Please work with the legislature and the Governor to make hit-and-run a felony in both Utah and Montana.

Sincerely,

For more information:

<http://www.blount.org> (jack@blount.org) - Blount Family Website

<http://www.deadlyroads.com/state-laws.html> - This web site is dedicated to victims of hit-and-run crimes, and lists hit-and-run laws in various states.

Excerpt from <http://www.deadlyroads.com/whydriversrun.shtml> -

Driving impaired is an epidemic that kills thousands every year. Thanks to traffic activist groups such as Mother Against Drunk Drivers, these numbers are falling - ever so slowly. Yet even their figures estimate 39% of all fatal crashes involve an impaired driver (2004). And while performing a wonderful service for all of us who travel America's highways, their success has actually compounded the problem of hit and run fatalities. In many states, an impaired driver who does not flee the scene of a fatality accident, now faces the possibility of a heavier sentence than their counterparts that may flee. From MADD's own web site "Unfortunately, because hit-and-run crashes are punished less severely than alcohol-related crashes, we have given drunk drivers an incentive to flee the crime to try to escape having a BAC test done." If captured shortly after the accident, it is sometimes more difficult for prosecuting attorneys to prove impairment 'at the time of the accident'. (For those who may fear we are giving away one of our legal systems dirty little secrets to the general public, we can assure you it is well known in drinking circles) Juries have grown wiser though, and the old "I was sober when I had the accident but I was so upset I ran home and got drunk" defense, is finding very little success in court. Regretfully, the repeat DUI offenders, who face manslaughter or murder charges, feel they have nothing to lose, and make up one of the largest groups of hit and run killers. See one state that corrected this at "Wisconsin gets it" <<http://www.deadlyroads.com/wisconsin-gets-it.html>>