Get Out of Jail Free??
Why Those Convicted of Felony DUI Should Not Be Allowed To Start Over

Every drinking driver can probably tell you that in order to receive a felony conviction on a “simple” DUI charge they have to be found guilty three times. Often, by the time someone is found guilty the third time, they have been ticketed for DUI a few more than three times.

Causing a crash that results in death or serious bodily injury will also land you a felony conviction no matter how many times you have been caught driving drunk.

But the driver who consistently drives drunk and has been arrested will very often find that his lawyer is able to plead him down to a lesser charge, and can sometimes magically make a misdemeanor disappear. By the time you are a DUI Felon you are a serious alcoholic.

What we know today is that alcoholism is a disease, it has to be treated or it will kill the drinker. Unfortunately, it may also kill others unlucky enough to cross paths with the alcoholic. Many drunks have been saved by a DUI; it has been the wake-up call they needed. But there are also the drunks who will continue to drink even after a felony conviction.

Right now in the state of Nevada, when a driver is convicted of felony DUI and is caught driving drunk again starts over again at square one and has to be convicted of DUI three more times before another felony is charged!

A law making all subsequent DUI’s felonies is needed in our state. We must prevent drivers from getting to wipe the slate clean.

A 1998 study found that fatally-injured drivers in alcohol-related crashes were eight times more likely to have had DUI/DWI convictions in the previous five years than drivers randomly selected from the general population of licensed drivers.

The Serious Offender Program
In Clark County we have a wonderful program for the drinking driver who is facing a felony DUI charge. It’s called The Serious Offender Program and it is a high-intensity supervision, house arrest and counseling program aimed at rehabilitating the alcoholic. It has a tremendous success rate, and saves the tax payers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in prison costs. The driver facing a felony conviction is offered the opportunity to enter this program rather than go to prison. There are many rules for being placed in the program, and to maintaining your space. One of the critical rules is that you sign a release waving your right to a second trip to court if you are removed from the program (basically a “go directly to jail card.”)

We need more funding for programs such as this. Treating the disease is much more cost effective than the inevitable crash that kills and injures the innocent and costs billions of dollars each year.