

A bill that would target habitual drunk drivers in Nebraska has been scheduled for a hearing before the legislature's Judiciary Committee on March 3.

Nebraska State Senator Pete Pirsch (District 4), the sponsor of LB 675, said he introduced the bill "to help eliminate the death and carnage that is regularly occurring on our streets because of drunk drivers."

"Nebraskans are fed up with serial drunk drivers, who repeatedly put other people's lives at risk," Senator Pirsch said. There are 116 individuals with 10 or more DUI convictions in the state of Nebraska, according to the state Department of Motor Vehicles records.

Under LB 675, drunk drivers with four prior convictions would receive a mandatory minimum five years in jail. Pirsch stated, "These offenders are the worst of the worst, and have no sincere interest in changing their dangerous ways."

Another part of the bill would create a new criminal offense that would apply to those already convicted of felony drunk driving.

Such offenders would be prohibited from driving a vehicle with a B.A.C. of .02 and over.

"It's a zero-tolerance approach for these serial drunk drivers," Senator Pirsch stated.

In addition, the bill would double fines for all drunk drivers, and toughen penalties for a driver leaving the scene of an accident resulting in death or serious bodily injury.

LB 675 would also create a new criminal offense for those driving a vehicle with any measurable amount of illegal drugs in their bloodstream.

Senator Pirsch, a criminal prosecutor before joining the legislature, said he witnessed first-hand the pain and grief victims and their families experienced as a result of drunk driving.

"I think my bill is badly needed and stands an excellent chance of passage this session."

He indicated the bill is expected to be designated as priority legislation.