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LAMONT WESTMORELAND

ALDERMAN, 5TH DISTRICT

So close – but we need more!

Statement of Alderman Lamont Westmoreland May 11, 2023

Earlier this week the Common Council adopted legislation that will allow the City of Milwaukee to impound vehicles involved in reckless driving. Specifically, if an offender is pulled over for driving recklessly a second time (and the first ticket was ignored), the Police Chief will have the power to impound the vehicle, whether it is registered or not.

This ordinance, which is expected to be signed by the Mayor as soon as tomorrow, is a great new tool for us in the battle against reckless driving, and I applaud everyone who worked to make it happen.

But I bet most residents would be surprised if told them that the new law only pertains to impounding when vehicle OWNERS are involved in reckless driving. Any police officer will tell you there is a high number of reckless drivers who are not titled to the vehicle they are driving while driving recklessly!

In many cases, the driver is being allowed to ‘borrow’ the vehicle from a friend or relative. For me, this is a serious problem! The law needs to be broader so these drivers aren't safe from getting the vehicle they were driving impounded -- yet doing so would require a change in state law.

Yes – you read that correctly. 2023 Wisconsin Act 1 created s. 349.115 Wis. Stats., which gives local authorities the power to impound vehicles, provided:

1. The owner of the car is being cited for reckless driving.
2. The owner of the car has a previous reckless driving conviction and has not fully paid the forfeiture for that citation.

In my view, we continue to be in an EMERGENCY when it comes to reckless driving. When these vehicles are being used in such a reckless manner – they are weapons – and we need to get as many weapons off the street as possible.

I will be pushing for a change to state law that allows officers to impound vehicles USED in reckless driving – PERIOD.

Only such a change, in my view, can eliminate a glaring loophole that allows vehicles to be used repeatedly in reckless driving incidents.

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