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Count Down to the New Year with Friends—Not Cellmates

(Houston, Tx) District Attorney Pat Lykos issued a cautionary message to holiday revelers: "Please celebrate the promise of the New Year with family and friends, joyously and safely; this is a time of renewal and new beginnings—do not drive drunk or drugged and start 2013 in jail or in the morgue."

"When such offenders injure or kill, it affects the victims, their families and society; the harm is incalculable. Our office is dedicated to preventing these senseless crimes and ensuring the harshest punishment for the perpetrators."

DA Pat Lykos applied for and received a grant from the Texas Department of Transportation for the No Refusal Program which provides specially trained prosecutors to be on call and available every weekend to all Harris County law enforcement agencies to assist in impaired driver cases. Those drivers who refuse the Intoxilyzer breath test will be subject to a search warrant and the drawing of a blood sample. No Refusal will be extended to New Year's Eve and Day. The Harris County Sheriff's Office and the Houston Police Department will have extra deputies and officers on patrol looking for intoxicated drivers.

"The combination of the No Refusal Program and the DIVERT Initiative, (to prevent repeat DWI offenders), has reduced the number overall of DWIs in 2012 and Intoxication Manslaughter cases are down from 50 in 2011 to 34 this year", Lykos said. "These successful projects are the result of The District Attorney's Office commitment and the efforts of our law enforcement partners to stopping the carnage of drunk drivers."

New Year's Eve festivities often involve alcoholic beverages. Prepare for the holiday in advance by designating a sober driver, hiring a taxi to transport you, or arranging for accommodations at the celebration site. The average DWI case costs a defendant on average around \$10,000—the average cab ride costs \$35 each way to your destination, which means one DWI equals 287 cab rides. Do not be the cause of tragedy to others.

Although Intoxication Manslaughter is decreasing, a fatality-free weekend and holiday remains the objective. The members of the DA's Office wish all in Harris County a happy and healthy New Year.

