

## New program focuses on finding, arresting DWI absconders

Written by Staff Reports

Friday, 30 December 2016 10:59

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### Statewide effort targets drunk drivers who skip court

SANTA FE – Governor Susana Martinez announced Dec. 28 that State Police will be conducting a targeted law enforcement operation every three months next year to find and arrest drunk drivers who failed to show up to court.

“If you drive drunk, you better be prepared to pay the price,” Martinez said. “Unfortunately, too many drunk drivers never even show up to court. These are dangerous drivers who have no respect for the law, and they are still out on our streets putting lives at risk. This operation sends a strong message that you cannot avoid justice – officers will find you and bring you back to jail where you belong.”

The operation targets DWI offenders who have avoided justice – many of whom are repeat offenders who have no regard for the safety of their fellow New Mexicans or for the law and continue to put lives at risk.

The Governor announced a similar operation earlier this year. During a three-day operation, law enforcement arrested 33 drunk drivers who didn’t show up to court. The roundups are a coordinated effort between law enforcement and courts across the state that identify DWI



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offenders who have an outstanding DWI bench warrant.

“The New Mexico State Police is committed to keeping our roadways safe from drunk drivers,” State Police Chief Pete Kassetas said. “Part of our reinforcement of DWI laws is partnering to apprehend those who disregard all aspects of justice by driving drunk and fleeing prosecution. In

coordinated efforts throughout the year, State Police officers will be dedicated to arresting DWI offenders who have failed to show up to court and continue to put New Mexicans in danger.”

This year, the Governor enacted legislation that increased penalties against drunk drivers to some of the toughest in the region.

Most recently, the administration launched a campaign aimed at stopping servers and establishments from over-serving alcohol.

Last year, in addition to a three-day DWI bench warrant roundup, she announced a court monitoring program that placed citizens inside courtrooms in six counties to shed light on how DWI cases are handled and a DWI fugitive program.

“The transportation department will continue to work with the Governor and law enforcement agencies across the state to educate New Mexicans on the dangers of drunk driving,” said NMDOT Secretary Tom Church. “DWI is a problem and everyone plays a part in stopping it.”