

# Teen drinking bill takes aim at parents

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Following the deaths of two teenagers in a drunken crash on homecoming night last fall, north suburban lawmakers on Monday proposed legislation that would toughen the penalties for parents who condone underage drinking in their homes.

Under the bill proposed by state Sen. Susan Garrett (D-Lake Forest), adults who allow minors to drink or provide them with alcohol could face felony charges if bodily harm occurs as a result. The law now allows only misdemeanor charges in such cases.

"[This] is not designed to put unwitting or unknowing parents in jail," Garrett. "We are attempting to heighten awareness of and increase sensitivity to the dangers of underage drinking.

"We must enforce this ... to hold parents accountable," she said.

While not the only reason for the bill, the Oct. 13 crash that killed Daniel Bell and Ross Trace, both 18, "was the straw that broke the camel's back," Garrett said at a news conference with other lawmakers, police and activists at the Lake County Building in Waukegan.

Tests showed Bell, who was driving, had a blood-alcohol level of .132, well over the legal limit of .08 for adults. Trace had recently smoked marijuana, toxicology tests showed.

Both attended Deerfield High School. Trace was a senior and Bell a 2006 graduate.

In December, Jeffrey and Sara Hutsell of the 700 block of Summit Drive, Deerfield, were charged with five misdemeanors after police said they allowed their son Jonathan Tyler Hutsell, a 2006 Deerfield graduate, to throw the drinking party Bell and Trace had attended before they died.