

# 1997 SESSION

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## HOUSE BILL NO. 2317

Offered January 17, 1997

*A BILL to amend and reenact § 8.01-44.5 of the Code of Virginia, relating to exemplary damages for persons injured by intoxicated drivers.*

Patrons—Moran, Albo, Cantor, Forbes, Griffith, Kilgore, McDonnell, McEachin, Melvin, Moore and Plum; Senators: Earley, Edwards and Williams

Referred to Committee for Courts of Justice

### **Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**

#### **1. That § 8.01-44.5 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 8.01-44.5. Exemplary damages for persons injured by intoxicated drivers.

In any action for personal injury or death arising from the operation of a motor vehicle, engine or train, the finder of fact may, in its discretion, award exemplary damages to the plaintiff if the evidence proves that the defendant acted with malice toward the plaintiff or the defendant's conduct was so willful or wanton as to show a conscious disregard for the rights of others.

A defendant's conduct shall be deemed sufficiently willful or wanton as to show a conscious disregard for the rights of others when the evidence proves that (i) *when the incident causing the injury or death occurred* the defendant had a blood alcohol concentration of 0.15 percent or more by weight by volume *or unreasonably refused to submit to a test of his blood alcohol or drug content as required in § 18.2-268.2* ~~when the incident causing the injury or death occurred~~, (ii) at the time the defendant began, or during the time he was, drinking alcohol, he knew that he was going to operate a motor vehicle, engine or train and (iii) the defendant's intoxication was a proximate cause of the injury to or death of the plaintiff.

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