**2019 IF YOU FEEL DIFFERENT, YOU DRIVE DIFFERENT**

**SAMPLE OP-ED**

**ENFORCEMENT VERSION**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Date]**

**CONTACT: [Name, Phone Number, E-mail Address]**

**Note: Before filling in the names of the organization and organization spokesperson, you MUST contact them for permission to use their names in this op-ed. Also, you must get their approval for the language of their quotations, and any changes or additions they may require. Only after this is done should you issue the op-ed.**

**This Labor Day, and Every Day:**

***Drive High, Get a DUI.***

Impaired driving is on the rise, and it doesn’t just include drunk driving. With constantly changing state laws regarding marijuana use, drug-impaired-driving crashes are an increasing problem on our nation’s roads. Impaired driving of any kind — alcohol or drugs — is dangerous and illegal. Each time a driver gets behind the wheel of a vehicle, he or she should ensure they are completely sober. Impaired driving is a choice, and it’s the wrong choice.

This Labor Day holiday, friends and families will come together to celebrate the last of the summer season. Unfortunately, this is also a time when impaired-driving fatalities increase. To help keep people safe on the streets and put an end to drug-impaired driving, local law enforcement will be out in full force in support of the *If You Feel Different, You Drive Different. Drive High, Get a DUI.* campaign. Between August 14 and September 2, 2019, law enforcement officers nationwide will team up with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to participate in high-visibility enforcement, pulling over and arresting drug-impaired drivers.

It is illegal to drive impaired in all 50 states and the District of Columbia — no exceptions. If drivers are impaired by any substance — alcohol or other drugs — they should not get behind the wheel of a vehicle. Driving while impaired is illegal, period. The bottom line is this: *If You Feel Different, You Drive Different. Drive High, Get a DUI.* It’s that simple.

According to NHTSA, in 2016, 42% of the drivers killed in fatal crashes who were tested, tested positive for drugs. This is why it’s so important we spread this lifesaving message: *If You Feel Different, You Drive Different. Drive High, Get a DUI.* It doesn’t matter what term you use: If a person is feeling a little high, buzzed, stoned, wasted, or drunk, he or she is impaired and should never get behind the wheel. Think driving while high won’t affect you? You’re wrong. It has been proven that Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) — the chemical responsible for most of marijuana’s psychoactive effects — slows reaction times, impairs cognitive performance, and makes it more difficult for drivers to keep a steady position in their lane. This is a deadly combination.

Something as simple as cold medication or an over-the-counter sleep aid could impair your driving. If it does, you could be arrested for a DUI. If you are taking a new prescription drug or a higher dose of a current prescription drug, do not drive until you know what effect it has on your judgement, coordination, and reaction time. Any effect could impair your driving ability. In fact, certain medications may not impair you on their own, but if taken with a second medication or with alcohol, they may cause impairment. Any form of impaired driving is illegal.

The decision to not drive impaired should never be a tough one. Impaired driving of all types is illegal and can be deadly — to the driver, to his or her passengers, and to other road users. We will be out on high alert, seeking out drug-impaired drivers during the holiday period, showing zero tolerance for anyone driving high or impaired. If you are pulled over and found to be driving impaired by any substance, you will be arrested — no excuses. It is against the law to drive impaired in every state, Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. Alcohol and drug consumption lowers inhibitions, causing you to make bad decisions you would not otherwise make. Do not trust yourself to drive safely when you are drinking alcohol or on drugs.

The *If You Feel Different, You Drive Different.* national high-visibility enforcement campaign ends on September 2. However, our commitment to enforcing impaired-driving laws never ends. Drug-impaired driving is never okay. If you are planning to indulge in an impairing substance, plan ahead for a sober ride home. Remember these tips for a safe night on the roads:

* If you have ingested an impairing substance, such as marijuana, alcohol, prescription drugs, sleep medication, or any form of illegal drug, do not drive. Passengers should never ride with an impaired driver. If you think a driver may be impaired, do not get in the car.
* If you are drug-impaired, pass the keys to a sober driver who can safely drive you to your final destination. Like drunk driving, it is essential that drug-impaired drivers refrain from driving a vehicle. It is never okay to drive while impaired by any substance.
* Have a friend who is about to drive while impaired by drugs? Take the keys away and arrange to get them home safely. Don’t worry about offending someone—they’ll thank you later.
* Use your community’s sober ride program **[Insert your local sober ride program specifics here]**.
* If you see an impaired driver on the road, contact **[Local Law Enforcement]**.

For more information about the *If You Feel Different, You Drive Different. Drive High, Get a DUI.* campaign, visit <https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/get-materials/drug-impaired-driving/drive-high-get-dui>.

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