

Well, there goes the drunk driver vote

Rockville Mayor Steve Van Grack may get the valuable "West End" vote in his bid for re-election, but last week he lost the drunk driver vote.

To his credit, we should add.

The elimination of drunk driving, as all but a handful of dangerous misfits know, is possibly the most celebrated social cause of the decade. Politicians build reputations by seeking the death penalty, or worse, for drunk drivers; those politicians who don't favor expulsion, excommunication and decapitation of drunks are themselves fed through the shredder of public opinion. Editorial writers, too, must write regular diatribes against drunk driving (we'll deny to our death that formal quotas exist) or risk losing their seats to eager young opinion writers with a plethora of new, innovative ways to castigate drunk driving.

So it was with considerable chagrin that Rockville acknowledged last week that its police department had been stripped of its power to conduct breathalyzer tests. Officials from the state's Office of Toxicology indefinitely suspended the department's powers Tuesday after an inspection showed that important reports were not sent to their office as required.

The suspension meant that Rockville city officers, as well as county police officers in the Rockville district, would have had to drive 12 miles to the Germantown police station to conduct breathalyzer tests.

Van Grack worked to remedy the situation, calling both the governor's office and the Office of Toxicology, and by Thursday afternoon, a solution was found. County police officers will give the tests in the city station until the Rockville department is again walking a straight line.

Quick action like that will, no doubt, enhance Van Grack's reputation as mayor, and as a candidate. But we caution that it could lay ruin to his reputation as a defense lawyer.