

## NASSAU COUNTY ADOPTS 'SOCIAL HOST LAW'

**By Oscar Michelen, Esq.**

The Nassau County Legislature this week passed a "Social Host Law" which places liability on homeowners for allowing underage drinking at their homes. The new social host law punishes anyone over the age of 21 who is aware of underage drinking at a party at their residence. A violation of the law would be punishable by a fine of \$250; a second violation, \$500; a third and any subsequent violations, \$1,000 or up to a year in prison.

The bill was proposed by Nassau County Legislator David Mejias and is expected to be signed into law by Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi sometime this week. As the founder of **The Law Squad™**, a prominent educational lecture panel, I have spoken to many parent and teen groups for years about their legal responsibility for underage drinking in their homes. This new law is a major step in increasing the risks of allowing underage drinking. Previously, the police could only charge a homeowner with Endangering the Welfare of a Child, a class A misdemeanor. At our firm, we have represented numerous homeowners charged with this crime. Nevertheless, that was a much higher standard for the police to prove. Now, the mere act of allowing underage drinking in the home can subject the homeowner to criminal penalties. Parents and homeowners need to be especially diligent and cautious now that this law is on the books.

The law also targets repeat offenders. As most parents of teens know, often it is the same household again and again that allows drinking. Those repeat offenders may now be facing jail time under this new legislation. At SB&M, we have years of experience in dealing with this issue. Please feel free to call us at **1-800-640-2000** should you have any questions about this new law or if you want advice on how best to protect yourself from being charged with this crime.