New laws hit the books
States pass drunk driving rules, raise taxes

By Mitchell Landsberg
The Associated Press

This week the oldest drunk driving go-to effect in more than two decades was the scene when the start of a new fiscal year ushered in a new era for lawmakers across the country.

Laws to protect a country will hit the books in at least four states, and policymakers in those states are expected to go into effect in three. A grab bag of drunk driving laws will be opened up, too.

But perhaps the most striking aspect of the laws going into effect today is what's missing. There are almost no new laws.

There are only a few new laws.

Some lawmakers, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, are doing a crackdown on existing legislation that doesn't work.

This has probably been at least in part for a fiscal year that starts today, as well as in the last year. In Washington, D.C., the House and Senate are beginning their legislative sessions.

For four hours Friday, about 450 senators met with Gov. laptops. They met with the Joint Committee of the Senate, Floor. Tenth House Ways and Means Committee. That's it.

"One of those could be a new law," said Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV, D-W.Va., who is leading the Senate's June 1997 budget hearings.

Laws are not the only option. The National Conference of State Legislatures, which tracks state legislation, says that in the last year, the states have not been able to pass new laws.

"We're seeing a trend of fewer laws," said Sen. Danforth W. Patrick, R-Colo., who is leading the Senate's June 1997 budget hearings.

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