



# Trooper Talk: Administrative License Suspension & Officer Perceptions

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## 1. BACKGROUND

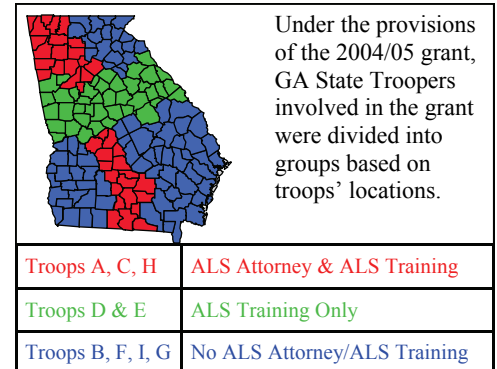
Officers failed to attend (FTA) 42% of all administrative license suspension (ALS) hearings in Georgia in 1999. An officer's failure to appear for a hearing results in an automatic suspension reversal. Georgia found 69% of ALS hearings for 1999 ended with a reversal. Law enforcement's presence was the single most important determinant of the outcome of the ALS hearing. The Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) surveyed law enforcement officers in 2000 to illuminate causes for officer FTA. Based on survey findings, a pilot project was initiated in 2004/05 to address issues raised, specifically the lack of state representation and a need for officer ALS training. Georgia State Patrol (GSP) troopers were selected to participate in the project. The initial attitude survey was re-distributed to examine troopers' attitudes about ALS following application of the grant initiatives.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

- 1) Examine survey responses to establish which factors have a direct bearing on the participation of troopers in ALS hearings
- 2) Determine if the addition of an ALS attorney and ALS training effected troopers' attitudes

## 3. METHODS

Approximately 670 GSP troopers participated in the grant. Troops were divided into one of three groups based on the troops' locations. Groups received one of three treatments: 1) accompanied by ALS attorney to hearings & ALS training, 2) ALS training only, or 3) control group. Prior to completion of the grant, an attitude survey examining attitudes, beliefs, and behavior of troopers was administered. The survey used a four point Likert-scale ranging from Strongly Agree (1) to Strongly Disagree (4), as well as five open-ended questions. Surveys were collected (n = 503) and basic descriptive statistics, including frequencies, were obtained.

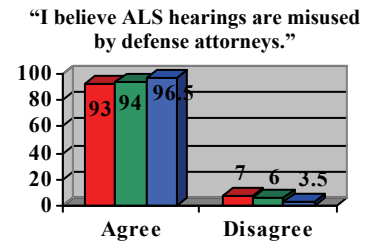
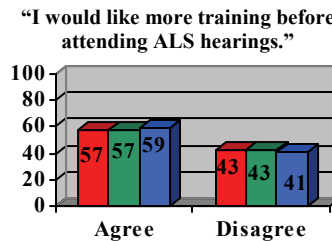
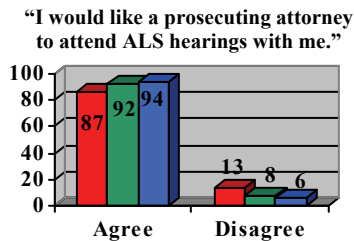
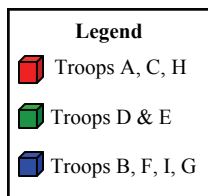
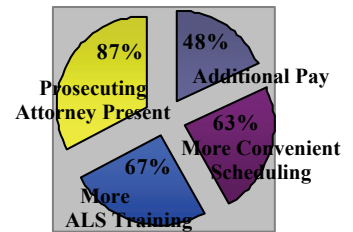


## 4. RESULTS

Findings from 2005 Survey Analysis:

- 91% of troopers indicated the desire to have a prosecuting attorney attend ALS hearings
- 95% of troopers believed ALS hearings are misused by the petitioners' counsel, using the hearing as a means of discovery for later use at the criminal DUI trial
- Troopers who had ALS training reported it to be thorough and helpful and would recommend the training for all officers
- Troopers from the control group were 38% more likely to believe the "hearing is a waste of my time because I'm going to lose anyway."
- 57% of troopers reported feeling prepared for ALS hearings; 61.5% of troopers with an ALS attorney and training felt prepared compared to 53% of troopers in the control group
- 59% of the control group desired more training; 57% of the troopers who received training still desired additional training

Factors troopers identified as most likely to increase ALS attendance



## 5. CONCLUSION

ALS loses its effectiveness as a tool to combat drunk driving if suspensions are routinely reversed. Failure of law enforcement officers to attend ALS hearings can negatively impact the reversal rate. To increase the likelihood officers attend, factors contributing to officer FTA must be addressed.

Survey responses suggest the following changes can increase attendance rates:

- ★ Provide officers with legal representation during ALS proceedings
- ★ Provide ongoing specific ALS training to officers
- ★ Enforce the prescribed scope of ALS hearings to limit petitioners' attorneys' attempts to allegedly misuse hearings
- ★ Coordinate calendars among courts and law enforcement agencies to reduce scheduling conflicts
- ★ Review financial compensation policies for attendance at ALS hearings



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<http://www.publichealth.uga.edu/hpb/research/tsreg.html>

