

Remarks of Tami Friedrich
Press Conference on the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Protection Act (SHIPA)
May 3, 2011
Washington, D.C.

Hello, my name is Tami Friedrich and I am from Corona, California. I am a Board member of Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) and the California volunteer coordinator for the Truck Safety Coalition.

I have been volunteering with the Truck Safety Coalition since my sister Kris, brother-in-law Alan, niece Brandie, and nephew Anthony were all killed in a crash involving an overturned gasoline tanker truck. I am just one family member representative of the more than 4,000 people who lose their lives every year in truck related fatalities.

The Truck Safety Coalition and I are pleased to be here with Senator Lautenberg and Congressman McGovern to support the reintroduction of the bi-partisan Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (SHIPA). We also express our gratitude to Congressman Obey for his leadership in years past.

There is an effort to increase federal truck weights from 80,000 to 100,000 lbs. If this effort progresses, heavier trucks will only become even more deadly than they are now. SHIPA would freeze truck weights on the National Highway System as well as retain the 1995 legislated freeze on longer combination vehicles (LCV's), triples and long doubles. In addition to freezing federal weight and size limits, there should be no exemptions for so-called pilot programs to allow heavier and longer trucks. Pilot programs seem to have no end and once one is granted it is more difficult to stop others from being passed. Larger trucks are more deadly and I would hate for other families to have to suffer the trauma that my family has endured.

Another major safety problem is driver fatigue which contributes to up to 40 percent of all fatal truck crashes. The new proposed hours of service rule would help to reduce the safety gaps in the current rule by limiting the number of consecutive driving hours to 10. Under the current rule truck drivers can drive 77 hours a week and work up to 84 hours per week, more than twice the normal 40 hour work week of most Americans. I urge Congress to allow the rule making process to proceed uninterrupted, and I urge the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to issue a rule with 10, and not 11, maximum driving hours.

In addition to the proposed Hours of Service (HOS) rule, the requirement of Electronic On-Board Recorders in all commercial motor vehicles will help to reduce truck driver fatigue by eliminating fraudulent paper log books and helping to improve the Hours of Service enforcement. Truck drivers are often pushed to drive longer hours to get the job done. EOBR's will help to protect the safety of truck drivers and the motoring public by keeping computerized records of their driving time thereby reducing driver fatigue.

Perhaps if some of these truck safety measures had been addressed before, my family would be with me today. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak to you about such critically important public safety issues.