

STATEMENT OF RUSS SWIFT
October 19, 2015

Good Morning. My name is Russ Swift and I am the Co-Chair of Parents Against Tired Truckers, known as PATT. I joined Steve and Daphne Izer, who founded PATT, after my son Jasen, and his friend Dustin, were killed in a terrible truck Crash on the 14th of October, 1993. Jasen and Dustin were Corporals in the United States Marines Corps. They were driving to work at the USMC Mountain Warfare Training Center in Pickle Meadow, California at O-dock-30, where they were stationed. A semi-truck attempting to make an illegal U-turn had stalled across both lanes of the highway. Jasen and Dustin's car collided with the center of the trailer, slamming underneath the trailer, killing them both instantly.

Later we found out that the truck was being driven by an underage driver, who was barely 18 at the time, with a learner's permit from California, while the legal owner/operator of the truck slept in the sleeping berth. The truck was not authorized to operate in interstate commerce, the driver had not maintained mandatory log books, did not comply with the hours of service regulations, and did not have the minimum required insurance. Less than a year after the Crash the Izers, who lost their son Jeff in a Crash caused by a tired trucker, and I, organized PATT in an effort to improve truck safety and prevent other families from experiencing a similar tragic loss.

It is incomprehensible to me that Congress is now considering legislation allowing 18-20 year olds to get behind the wheel of massive 18-wheelers. Research showing the dangers and risks of young drivers is clear and it is compelling. Studies show that involvement rates in large truck Crashes increase as the age of the driver decreases. Young drivers, 18 to 20 have Crash rates that are four to six times higher than those of more mature truck drivers. This misguided attempt to address a perceived shortage of truck drivers will put lives at risk. Driving a truck is one of the most dangerous profession in the United States. Rather than taking realistic steps to make truck driving safer for truck drivers and the American public, the industry is fully disregarding safety risks by trying to put teens at the wheel of massive rigs.

This flawed idea is not new. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, or FMCSA, has previously rejected lowering the age limit for commercial driver's licenses because there was absolutely no proof that the safety performance of younger drivers would be anywhere close to that of older drivers. Further, the proposal to lower the CDL licensing age has been overwhelmingly rejected by those who responded; with 96 percent of individuals, 88 percent of the truck drivers, and 86 percent of the motor carriers opposed to this thoroughly ridiculous notion. This was a terrible, misguided idea then, and it is a terrible, misguided idea now. I am speaking for the American driving public, for the 18 to 20 year old drivers who will become the martyrs to this ill-conceived idea, and my son Jasen. I am appealing to the common sense of our Congress and urging them to reject this foolish proposal.