



Parents Against Tired Truckers and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Bill Bronrott, 202-270-4415 and 301-896-0003; [bbcomm@aol.com](mailto:bbcomm@aol.com)  
Bill Redding, 508-269-4770 and 703-294-6404; [bredding@trucksafety.org](mailto:bredding@trucksafety.org)

**Families of truck crash victims to turn “Sorrow to Strength” by launching  
StopBiggerTrucks.org  
campaign protesting efforts to increase truck size and weight limits roads and bridges**

***New national poll finds strong public opposition to bigger rigs and industry efforts  
to increase federal truck size and weight limits on nation’s roads and bridges.***

**Truck safety advocates release new state-by-state report ranking most deadly states  
for fatal truck crashes – How does your state measure up?**

WASHINGTON, DC (May 4, 2009) – Grieving families of truck crash victims from across the country were joined today by safety advocates to launch the new StopBiggerTrucks.org grassroots campaign telling Congress to reject any size and weight increases for trucks traveling on U.S. highways and bridges. The group also issued a new state-by-state study ranking the deadliest states for fatal truck crashes.

A new national poll released today by Lake Research Partners found that 8 of 10 Americans believe that bigger trucks will make our highways less safe and only 16 percent support a trucking and shipping industry push for Congress to approve bigger overweight trucks and rollback of the 1991 congressionally-mandated freeze on longer combination trucks (LCVs) -- double and triple trailer trucks.

Today’s news announcement capped off a “Sorrow to Strength” conference in the nation’s capital that brought together dozens of survivors of truck crashes and families and friends of those killed or injured for four days of sharing, remembrance, workshops and public policy actions to advance truck safety. Truck crash families and friends are meeting with Members of Congress and Administration officials to press for their support of these commonsense, cost-effective and life-saving measures.

“Truck crash victims remind us that setting and enforcing strong rules for truck size and weight and the maximum driving and working hours for truck drivers makes the difference between life and death,” said Joan Claybrook, board chair of Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) and long-time consumer and highway safety advocate. She added, “When a loved one is killed in a preventable truck crash the entire family suffers a lifelong devastating and debilitating loss. The American public understands what is at stake as revealed by this new national poll released today.”

Tracy Quinichett, (Laurel, MD) mother of University of Maryland senior Channing Quinichett, age 21, who was killed January 21, 2009, when a tire flew off a truck being towed on the Capital Beltway and smashed through her windshield participated for the first time in Sorrow to Strength. At the time of the crash, Channing was pregnant and driving to a prenatal care appointment. The Baltimore County resident graduated from Magruder High School in Montgomery County, and was to receive her early childhood education degree from the state university on May 22.

Tracy Quinichett said, “My daughter, Channing, was so eager to become a school teacher and would have made a huge contribution to many lives. She should not have been killed. We are here today to prevent

other families from facing the pain and sorrow we will now shoulder the rest of our lives. We must do whatever we can to make our roads safer.”

Kathleen Ellsbury, M.D. traveled from Seattle, Washington to also attend for the first time. She is the widow of University of Washington professor and seismologist Anthony Qamar who was killed October 5, 2005, along with his colleague, when an overloaded logging truck with multiple safety citations lost its load on Highway 101. The tragedy prompted Dr. Ellsbury to lobby for passage of the Tony Qamar and Daniel Johnson Act to improve motor carrier safety in her state.

Dr. Ellsbury said, “I made my trek from Washington State to Washington, DC on behalf of a great man and humanitarian – Tony Qamar. I am here to urge our Congress and our President to freeze truck size and weights limits and to pass laws with real teeth to prevent and punish unsafe truckers and unsafe companies – and to do it now. We can’t wait any longer when so many of our loved ones are dying unnecessarily.”

Dana Wood, the 18-year-old daughter of Frank and Marchelle Wood (Falls Church, Virginia), and an East Carolina University student was killed along with a classmate on October 15, 2002, when their car was struck and dragged 1500 feet on I-95 by a speeding trucker with a suspended license who had clocked nine hours of driving that day. Dana was a graduate of George Mason High School in Falls Church, Virginia.

Marchelle Wood said, “We came here to say that we as a nation can and must do better. We support the Truck Safety Coalition’s project to launch a nationwide petition drive on the website, [www.stopbiggertrucks.org](http://www.stopbiggertrucks.org), and call on families everywhere to tell our Members of Congress and President that we’ve had enough of letting the trucking industry drive the safety agenda. Put families first.”

Dawn King (Davisburg, Michigan), lost her father, William Badger, in a crash on December 23, 2004, when a tractor trailer driver fell asleep at the wheel and collided with his car. Dawn has since joined the Board of Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) and has participated in its First Response program to assist other grieving truck crash victims.

“Bigger trucks are more dangerous and take longer to stop and are prone to rollover. These trucks are a threat to the safety of everyone – motorists and truck drivers,” said Dawn King.

The Truck Safety Coalition’s “Sorrow to Strength” conference for victims and survivors of truck crashes comes as Congress takes up the multi-year, multi-billion dollar federal surface transportation reauthorization legislation. Trucking and shipping interests have been lobbying Congress to increase the federal truck size and weight limits for their own economic gains while pushing for other measures to rollback lifesaving truck safety rules and regulations.

Safety groups also released a state-by-state ranking of the most dangerous states based on truck fatalities per 100,000 population. Jackie Gillan, CRASH board member in discussing the results summarized by stating, “By any measure, this is a public health crisis and it is affecting every person, in every community, in every state across the country. Political leaders would never tolerate this many people dying in airplane crashes. Yet, year in and year out the truck crash death and injury toll remains the same while the safety agenda stalls in Congress and is ignored at the U.S. Department of Transportation.”

The Truck Safety Coalition’s “Sorrow to Strength” conference for victims and survivors of truck crashes comes as Congress takes up the multi-year, multi-billion dollar federal surface transportation reauthorization legislation. Trucking and shipping interests have been lobbying Congress to increase the federal truck size and weight limits for their own economic gains while pushing for other measures to rollback lifesaving truck safety rules and regulations.

Truck safety advocates are urging Congress to enact H.R.1618 and S.779, a bi-partisan bill with over 60 co-sponsors, to freeze the current limit of 80,000 pounds and 53 feet maximum length for tractor trailer trucks on interstate highways and the 160,000-mile National Highway System to improve safety and prevent

excessive strain on the nation's roads, tunnels and bridges. They also oppose any rollback of the freeze on longer combination vehicles.

Big trucks pose threats to America's roads, bridges and other infrastructure. The American Society of Civil Engineers reports that, as of December 2008, 161,892 of the nation's 600,905 bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. In addition, one 110,000-pound triple trailer causes as much damage as 13,981 mini-vans.

The Truck Safety Coalition ([www.trucksafety.org](http://www.trucksafety.org)) is a partnership between Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) and Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T) dedicated to reducing death and injury caused by truck-related crashes, providing compassionate support to truck crash survivors and families of truck crash victims, and educating the public, policy-makers and media about truck safety issues.