



Parents Against Tired Truckers and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

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Truck Safety Legislation Introduced in Congress; New Poll Shows Strong Opposition to Bigger, Heavier Trucks and Support for Changing Driving Hours to Address Fatigue

Victims, Law Enforcement, Truck Drivers and Safety Advocates Join Bill Sponsors to Urge Swift Action to Keep Dangerous Trucks off Nation's Highways, State Rankings of Truck Fatalities Released

WASHINGTON, D.C., (Tuesday May 3, 2011) -- Victims of truck fatalities and injuries joined today with safety advocates, law enforcement, truck drivers and Senate and House sponsors to announce the introduction of critical truck safety legislation which will freeze truck size and weight limits.

The Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act, (SHIPA) sponsored by U.S. Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and U.S. Representative James McGovern (D-MA) and others in Congress, will freeze current federal truck size and weight limits, close existing loopholes that allow operation of overweight trucks, and establish an enforcement program to ensure accountability.

“Every year about 4,000 people needlessly die on our highways and 100,000 more are injured in truck crashes. Families and truck drivers are being slaughtered on our highways because of the trucking industry relentless push for bigger, overweight trucks operated by drivers who are exhausted and pressured to meet unreasonable delivery deadlines,” said Joan Claybrook, Chair of the Board of Directors, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH). “Today's poll results are clear and compelling. Enough is enough. It's time to seriously address truck driver fatigue. The public strongly opposes bigger, overweight trucks and Congress should heed this message.”

A new national poll released at the press conference by the Truck Safety Coalition (TSC) shows overwhelming support for truck weight and size limitations, and revising the federal rule on driving hours for truck drivers. The poll, available at www.trucksafety.org, and conducted for the Truck Safety Coalition by Lake Research Partners shows:

- 74 percent oppose heavier trucks, with 56 percent strongly opposed
- 85 percent oppose an increase in taxes to pay for damages to roads from longer, heavier trucks
- 79 percent favor lower driving hours limit, with 60 percent strongly in favor

Supporting the SHIPA introduction were dozens of survivors of truck crashes who traveled to Washington from around the country to participate in the TSC's Sorrow to Strength conference. The conference brings together truck crash survivors for four days of remembrance, advocacy workshops and meeting with Members of Congress and U.S. DOT officials to advance truck safety priorities.

Linda Wilburn, a Board member of Parents Against Tired Truckers from Oklahoma, lost her son Orbie in September 2002 when a semi-trailer truck crashed into the back of his car knocking it into the rear of another truck, killing him instantly. No apparent attempt to slow down or stop was made by the truck

driver who had repeatedly falsified driving logs and violated safety procedures. “What happened to my son was not an accident, but unfortunately senseless crashes like this happen every day. Recently, our nation was outraged to learn that an air traffic controller fell asleep while on duty at Reagan National Airport. Unfortunately, there is not the same sense of urgency when it comes to motor carrier safety. Every day thousands of tired truckers are on our highways jeopardizing their own safety and the safety of other motorists. Truck driver fatigue is a major cause of truck crashes and fatalities.”

The Truck Safety Coalition also released a report ranking the fifty states on truck crash fatalities for 2010. The top ten worst states in order are: North Dakota, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Mississippi and Wyoming. The complete list is available at www.trucksafety.org.

Tami Friedrich of Corona, California and CRASH Board member lost her sister Kris, along with Kris’ husband and two children, in a crash involving an overturned gasoline tanker truck. “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 not to block this rule because trucking and shipping interests don’t like it. The public strongly support this overdue change to the hours of service rule and it’s time to take driver fatigue seriously. This rule puts public safety ahead of trucking productivity. I urge the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to issue a rule with 10, and not 11, maximum driving hours.”

“I see first-hand the dangers of trucks not in compliance with safety regulations and drivers who exceed hours of service limits,” said Robert Mills who serves as a Police Officer for the Fort Worth Texas Commercial Vehicle Enforcement program. “The nation’s cities and counties cannot handle higher weight limits on our already stressed roads and bridges. Any increase would cost our cities money and result in more deaths. Frankly, we can’t afford either. That is why I support the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act, also known as SHIPA, which will maintain current truck weight limits on our Interstates and freeze them on the National Highway System.”

The Truck Safety Coalition is a partnership between Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH) and Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.) dedicated to reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by truck-related crashes, providing compassionate support to truck crash survivors and families of truck crash victims, and educating the public, policymakers and media about truck safety issues.

More information is available at www.trucksafety.org.

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