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**STATEMENT OF JACKIE GILLAN, PRESIDENT OF
ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY
ON *60 MINUTES* REPORT ON CRUMBLING INFRASTRUCTURE
*Congress and the Obama Administration Must Protect Current Truck Size and
Weight Limits to Stop Additional Damage and Preventable Deaths and Injuries***

The investigative report by Steve Kroft aired last night by CBS on *60 Minutes* on our immediate infrastructure funding and repair crisis, “Falling Apart: America’s Neglected Infrastructure,” brought overdue attention to the declining condition of our nation’s transportation infrastructure and the safety implications of delaying adequate financial investments in repairing and upgrading our roads and bridges. The growing safety risk to the public from collapsing bridges and dilapidated roads is real and needs to be addressed. Not only does Congress and the Obama Administration need to identify and act on proposals for increasing infrastructure funding but there is also a need to resist relentless efforts by trucking and shipping interests to allow bigger, heavier and longer trucks on our roads and bridges. The data is clear and indisputable. Bigger trucks mean bigger infrastructure damage, bigger safety threats and bigger economic costs to the public.

Truck crashes are a serious, deadly and costly problem to families, our infrastructure, our health care system, and to the economy. Large truck crashes are on the rise. In 2012, 3,921 people died and 104,000 more were injured in truck crashes. This is equivalent to a major airplane crash every week all year long. In fatal truck and car crashes, 96% of those killed are the occupants of the passenger vehicle. The annual cost to society from crashes involving commercial motor vehicles is estimated to be over \$99 Billion.

Despite these alarming statistics, right now special trucking and shipping interests are relentlessly pushing an agenda on Capitol Hill and in State Capitols to increase truck size and weight limits regardless of the risk to public safety, growing public infrastructure needs and strong public opposition. The public understands the grave dangers posed by bigger, heavier trucks. By overwhelming margins in numerous public opinion polls, the American public consistently and convincingly rejects sharing the road with bigger, heavier and longer trucks no matter the political affiliation, age, sex or geographic location of the respondent.

The catastrophic annual mortality and morbidity toll of large truck crashes and the threat to bridge and roadway safety highlighted by last year’s Interstate 5 bridge collapse in Washington

State as well as the 2007 I-35 bridge collapse in Minnesota serve to validate concerns that the public and safety groups have regarding truck safety. Industry claims that allowing bigger and heavier trucks will result in fewer trucks on our roads and bridges and thereby benefit public safety and infrastructure maintenance are wrong and disputed by past history. Bigger trucks dramatically accelerate road and bridge damage and decrease safety. If Congress increases the highway gas tax and the size and weight limits of trucks, motorists will pay with their wallets and their lives.

The American public will support pragmatic solutions to repairing and improving our roads and bridges. However, they will not support political solutions that increase their gas tax and compromise their safety for the benefit of advancing the economic agenda of special trucking and shipping industries. In the interests of public safety, the protection of our transportation infrastructure, and the preservation of our dwindling tax revenues and our environment, it is crucial for Congress and the Obama Administration to resist attempts to ratchet up truck sizes and weights. Finding sensible solutions to our nation's critical infrastructure funding shortfall and reducing the unacceptable highway carnage should be front and center for our nation's leaders. These goals are too important to be subject to political deals that compromise both.

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