



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY



Citizens for Reliable
and Safe Highways



P.A.T.T.

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**JOINT STATEMENT OF
JACKIE GILLAN, PRESIDENT OF ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY,
JOAN CLAYBROOK, CHAIR OF CITIZENS FOR RELIABLE AND SAFE HIGHWAYS,
AND DAPHNE IZER, FOUNDER OF PARENTS AGAINST TIRED TRUCKERS
ON
TRACY MORGAN SETTLEMENT ON CRASH INVOLVING TIRED TRUCKER REACHED AS
CONGRESS POISED TO PASS ASSAULT ON TRUCK SAFETY LAWS**

As the one-year anniversary approaches of the horrific truck crash involving a tired trucker behind the wheel of a Walmart truck which hit and killed comedian James McNair and seriously injured Tracy Morgan and two others, Congress is poised to launch an all-out assault on truck safety by passing a federal spending law that guts and rolls back several lifesaving laws. Recent news stories indicate that Walmart and the crash victims including Tracy Morgan have reached a financial settlement.

Despite alarming increases in truck crash deaths and injuries since 2009, some members of Congress are pushing a legislative overhaul of lifesaving truck safety laws and rules in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) appropriations bill at the request of influential industry executives. The House of Representatives will take up this bill for floor debate next week. So-called “riders” in the federal spending bill will force every state to allow extra-long trucks pulling double 33 foot tractor trailers throughout the country, dramatically increase working and driving hours for truck drivers to 82 hours a week, carve out exemptions to federal truck size and weight laws, and stop a public rulemaking reviewing minimum insurance coverage for trucks and passenger carrying buses.

“Unfortunately, crashes like this one involving a truck driver who fell asleep at the wheel will continue to kill and maim innocent families if Congress continues to pander to the wishes of special trucking interests. The House is taking up a federal transportation spending bill next week that will result in oversized and overweight trucks on our roads driven by overworked and overtired truckers. Public opinion polls are clear and convincing. By large majorities the public does not support any of these changes being pushed by special interests behind closed doors,” said Jackie Gillan, president of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

“Truck crash fatalities have gone up by 17% and injuries by 28% over the last four years. Every day about 10 people die in truck crashes and 275 more are injured. Every year an average of 4,000 people needlessly die in truck crashes and 100,000 more are injured. Commercial motor vehicle crashes have a price tag of \$99 billion annually. The economic and emotional costs to families and our economy are staggering. Yet, instead of advancing public safety, proposals are now being considered in Congress advancing industry profits,” said Joan Claybrook, Chair,

Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways and former Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) during the Carter Administration.

The House spending bill for the Department of Transportation includes the FedEx plan to force every state to allow extra-long, dangerous trucks pulling double 33 foot trailers. Another provision will extend the dramatic increase in the weekly working and driving hours of truck drivers by taking away their weekend off allowing them to work 82 hours a week. This change was championed by Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) last year. There are also truck size and weight exemptions for states that dramatically exceed current limits. Finally, trucking interests are trying to stop an on-going and public agency rulemaking to review and determine if insurance requirements are adequate for motor carriers including trucks and passenger carrying buses.

Daphne Izer, Founder of Parents Against Tired Truckers (PATT), who lost her son Jeff in a crash caused by a Walmart driver who fell asleep at the wheel said, "Truck drivers are being pushed beyond physical and mental limits to work up to 82 hours a week, more than double the average work week of most Americans. And, truck crash fatalities are on the rise. Yet, ignoring these sobering facts, Congress seems dead-set on putting more tired truckers on the road. This will jeopardize their lives and the lives of our family members. Backroom deals to gut effective and needed truck safety laws will only benefit trucking interests and not families like mine."

Izer continued, "We need Congress and the Obama Administration to stand up for innocent motorists and truck drivers. The Tracy Morgan crash anniversary should serve as a reminder that 4,000 people being killed in truck crashes and 100,000 more being injured is not acceptable. If Congress prevails then President Obama should veto this bill and not lose any sleep over putting the safety of our families first and not giving a 'free pass' to trucking industry interests to plow over current safety laws."

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