

STATEMENT OF DAWN KING  
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Good morning and welcome. My name is Dawn King and I am President of the Truck Safety Coalition. I am also a board member of Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways, or CRASH.

We are at an important crossroads with regards to truck safety. Currently, Congress is facing a looming deadline for reauthorizing surface transportation programs. On July 30, the Senate passed the DRIVE Act, which is a multi-year, multi-billion dollar piece of legislation reauthorizing surface transportation policy. Included in the DRIVE Act is a so-called "safety title," which is loaded with anti-truck safety provisions that will jeopardize truck drivers, motorists, passengers, and other road users such as bicyclists and pedestrians. This week, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will mark-up their version of a long-term surface transportation bill. These bills have historically represented an opportunity to secure provisions that will improve truck safety. Yet both bills not only fall well-short of that mark, they are a departure from tradition and will imperil the lives and well-being of families. Further, earlier this year the House passed their version of the Fiscal Year 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development funding bill, and the Senate considered their own version, both which have numerous disturbing provisions that will put safety in reverse. To say that we are concerned is a massive understatement.

All of these bills are fraught with handouts for the trucking industry. Congress has delivered on a range of industry wish-list items that will bolster profits at the expense of public safety. First, there are provisions in the House and Senate funding bills that would increase the length of double trailer trucks by a total of 10 feet. This proposal has widespread opposition and was quietly tacked onto the bills as a rider, never being subject to public input or Congressional hearings. Other provisions tucked into the funding bills include continuing the "tired trucker" provision which increases the work week of truck drivers from 70 hours to 82 hours and takes away their two-night rest period. It also includes language that would interfere with an ongoing rule making that is meant to address severely insufficient minimum insurance levels for motor carrier companies. The DRIVE Act and the House reauthorization bill include language that would hide critical safety data on trucking companies from public view, keeping consumers in the dark about bad actors that they may potentially hire to move goods or for other services. We are also opposed to several attempts to exempt certain states and industries from federal truck size and weight limits as well as any efforts to raise the national federal truck size and weight limits. Individually all of these legislative proposals are harmful to public safety. Together, they represent an unprecedented attack on truck safety.

With nearly 4,000 people killed every year as a result of large truck crashes, we cannot afford another six years of government inaction, another six years of hundreds of billions being spent on commercial motor vehicle crashes, and another six years in which almost 25,000 people will needlessly lose their lives.

These crashes can happen at any time to anyone, anywhere. And the problem continues to worsen. Between 2009 and 2013, large truck crash fatalities in the United States increased by 17%, and by 31% in my home state of Michigan. During that same time, pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities resulting from large truck crashes skyrocketed by 31 percent and 39 percent, respectively. Additionally, these policies continue to make a dire situation even worse for the drivers themselves. Trucking is continually considered one of the most unsafe professions. It should come as no surprise that along with the increases in pedestrian, bicyclist, and motorist truck crash fatalities, there was also a 38 percent increase in truck driver fatalities over the same time period. Clearly, this is a problem that Congress must work to address.

While the data and statistics are all compelling, we must step back and remember that these numbers represent real lives, real people, and real families forever changed because of a truck crash. In 2004, my father, Bill Badger, was killed near the Georgia state line by a tired trucker who had fallen asleep at the wheel after driving all night. Unfortunately, my story is not unique. Today you will also hear from the Co-founder of Parents Against Tired Truckers, Russ Swift, who started the organization after a teenage trucker killed his son, Jasen; Truck Safety Coalition's Vice President, Jane Mathis, whose son David and his wife Mary Kathryn were killed by a tired trucker; Morgan Lake, who survived a truck crash after a truck slammed into the back of her car sending it 27 feet over the side of a bridge; and Santiago Calderon, one of the students who survived a FedEx double tractor-trailer crashing into a bus carrying high school students on a college tour. I am also joined in D.C. by dozens of families who all have tragic stories of their own about how truck crashes have devastated their lives. We have come to Washington, from across the country, to honor our loved ones and harness our horrific and unimaginable losses into change and action, so that other families can be spared the grief that we all share.

Thank you.