

JOINT STATEMENT ON RELEASE OF NEW STUDY, “UNCLOGGING AMERICA’S ARTERIES 2015”

**DAWN KING, PRESIDENT OF TRUCK SAFETY COALITION,
BOARD MEMBER OF CITIZIENS FOR RELIABLE AND SAFE HIGHWAYS (CRASH)**

**JANE MATHIS, VICE PRESIDENT OF TRUCK SAFETY COALITION
BOARD MEMBER OF PARENTS AGAINST TIRED TRUCKERS (PATT)**

Today, Secretary of Transportation Anthony Foxx, and the American Highway Users Alliance, held a press conference on the results of a new study that identifies and ranks America’s worst 50 traffic bottlenecks, “Unclogging America’s Arteries 2015, Prescriptions for Healthier Highways.” While we welcome more information about the effects of congestion on our roads, we were stunned that safety was largely omitted from the discussion. This should not be the case considering there was a 17 percent increase in truck crash fatalities and a 28 percent increase in truck crash injuries between 2009 and 2013. Congress cannot simply acquiesce to the trucking industry’s demands; failing to identify opportunities to improve safety as part of the congestion discussion is a mistake.

Thanksgiving, for many, is a joyous time when families gather around the table to talk and reflect. In families like ours, however, the empty seat at our table serves as a constant reminder of our loved ones that were needlessly killed in truck crashes. This year during the Thanksgiving weekend, approximately 55 people will be killed and another 1,300 people will be injured in large truck crashes. We must do more to stop these truck crash deaths and injuries from occurring; we must do more to ensure that other families don’t have an empty chair this year at their tables.

Unfortunately, select shipping and trucking interests are currently advancing efforts in Congress that will benefit only them, while making our roads less safe for everyone. Our senators and representatives should not vote for the cornucopia of dangerous special interest handouts stuffed into the DRIVE Act. Trucking interests may be thankful for provisions allowing interstate teen truck drivers, permitting greater Hours of Service exemptions to certain classes of motor carriers, or slowing rulemakings to review the minimum level of insurance, but the motoring public and taxpayers will continue to pay with their wallets and lives.

The American Trucking Associations (ATA) President and CEO Bill Graves’ aggressive agenda to include language in the DRIVE Act and Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bill to increase truck size and weight speak to the ATA’s true intentions – increasing profits at any expense. There is no safety rationale for Congress to increase the length of double tractor trailers from 28 feet per trailer to 33 feet per trailer, which would result in a 22 foot longer stopping distance and a larger blind spot.

This misguided policy cannot be the solution to the troubling fact that trucks constitute four percent of the registered vehicles in this country, but are involved in 28 percent of all fatal work zone crashes. If anything, a longer stopping distance will make tragic crashes where the truck

driver is unable to brake in time before colliding into the backs of cars stopped in traffic more common. We have seen these types of truck crashes all too often: an April crash in Georgia that claimed the lives of five nursing students, a June crash in Tennessee that left six dead, and just two days ago in Pennsylvania, two more lives were ended by a truck that crashed into them because the truck driver could not stop his vehicle in time.

Instead of considering longer trucks, Congress should have been working to include a mandate for forward collision avoidance mitigation (F-CAM) braking systems on all large trucks. This technology warns drivers and, ultimately, will apply the brakes if the truck is getting too close to another object or vehicle. It is disappointing that Congress did not include an F-CAM requirement in the DRIVE Act that would actually prevent crashes, reduce injuries, and save lives.

In today's statement, former governor Graves said, "these bottlenecks cost our economy billions with the delays they cause moving our nation's freight. They are truckers' worst nightmares come true, but one that tens of thousands of our nation's freight haulers have to deal with daily."

Taking someone's life should be a trucker's worst nightmare, not being delayed.

Please join us in spreading a message of safety this holiday season. This Thanksgiving should not be about the trucking industry being thankful for a holiday weekend in which as few dollars as possible were lost due to traffic and delays. It should be about the public being thankful for a safe holiday weekend in which as few people as possible were needlessly killed or injured in truck crashes.

###