



May 02, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chair
The Honorable Ted Cruz, Ranking Member
Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz:

America is in the midst of a truck crash crisis. Since 2009, truck crash deaths have increased by 71% with 5,700 lives lost and nearly 155,000 injured in 2021 (the most recent year for which data is available).¹ Fatalities to large truck occupants (largely truck drivers) surged past 1,000 for the first time in nearly 30 years. Driving a large truck has become nearly twice as deadly as wielding a firearm and protecting the public every day as a law enforcement officer.² Failing to act is unacceptable and invites carnage, casualties, and incalculable suffering to continue unabated on our roads and highways.

Meanwhile, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) continues to function without a Senate-confirmed Administrator. Ensuring NHTSA is equipped to deliver on its mission to save lives, prevent injuries and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes has arguably been more necessary. NHTSA reports that the total value of societal harm from ALL motor vehicle crashes in 2019 was nearly \$1.4 trillion. Public revenues paid for roughly 9 percent of all motor vehicle crash costs, costing taxpayers \$30 billion in 2019, equal to \$230 in added taxes for every household in the United States.³

Leadership matters and the American people deserve to have NHTSA operating at its highest capacity in this time of crisis. Robert Bonner, former DEA and CBP Administrator explains that it is imperative for government departments and agencies to have their Senate-confirmed leaders, “To effectively lead an agency, you need as much authority and gravitas as you can muster. If you’re not a confirmed head of an agency...you’re not going to be able to command as much respect and attention from your own people and from other agencies whose cooperation is important.”⁴

¹ Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2021, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 435.

² <https://nleomf.org/memorial/facts-figures/officer-fatalities-by-state/latest-fatality-reports/>

³ NHTSA, The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019 (Revised), February 2023, DOT HS 813 403

⁴ Byron Tau, “Half of 10 Biggest Federal Law Agencies Lack Permanent Chiefs,” The Wall Street Journal, May 16, 2019. Retrieved from <https://on.wsj.com/2Wwzkua>

On behalf of truck crash victims past, present, and future, the Truck Safety Coalition requests the US Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee expeditiously conduct the necessary hearings to confirm the country's next NHTSA Administrator.

Sincerely,



Tami Friedrich Trakh
President
Truck Safety Coalition

Tami's sister, Kris, brother-in-law, Alan, and two of their children, Brandie and Anthony, were killed in 1989 when a tanker truck overturned in front of them and exploded.



Zach Cahalan
Executive Director, Truck Safety Coalition (TSC)

cc: Senator Amy Klobuchar
Senator Brian Schatz
Senator Ed Markey
Senator Gary Peters
Senator Tammy Baldwin
Senator Tammy Duckworth
Senator Jon Tester
Senator Kyrsten Sinema
Senator Jacky Rosen
Senator Ben Ray Lujan
Senator John Hickenlooper
Senator Raphael Warnock
Senator Peter Welch
Senator John Thune
Senator Roger Wicker
Senator Deb Fischer
Senator Jerry Moran
Senator Dan Sullivan
Senator Marsha Blackburn
Senator Todd Young
Senator Ted Budd
Senator Eric Schmitt
Senator J.D. Vance
Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Senator Cynthia Lummis