

Safety Spotlight – Recommendations for Markup of S. 2016

From Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, American Public Health Association, Center for Auto Safety, Center for Disability Rights, Citizens for Auto Reliability and Safety, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH), Consumer Federation of America, FIA Foundation, Kids and Car Safety, League of American Bicyclists, National Coalition For Safer Roads, National Consumers League, Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.), Public Citizen, Society For the Advancement of Violence and Injury Research, Trauma Foundation, Truck Safety Coalition, .05 Saves Lives Coalition

Improvements Needed to Existing Provisions

Underlined issues are needed changes

Vehicle Safety Technology and Other Vital Improvements:

- Require proven crash avoidance technology in all new cars and trucks, add requirements to ensure the technology will detect and respond to pedestrians, bicyclists and other vulnerable roads users (VRUs), and add a date certain for compliance (Sec. 3010 & Sec. 4208)
- Require driver monitoring systems by a date certain to prevent automation complacency and curb leading crash causes including distracted, impaired and drowsy driving (Sec. 4209)
- Ensure the seat back standard is updated to prevent seat back failures and the resulting fatalities and injuries which are often sustained by children properly restrained in the backseat (Sec. 4204)
- Add a date certain for requirements to improve hood and bumper standards to better protect bicyclists, pedestrians and other VRUs (Sec. 4214)
- Expand protections for issues associated with keyless ignition switches to address roll-aways in addition to curbing carbon monoxide poisoning (Sec. 4205)
- Link operation of impaired driving prevention technology to state blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits (Sec. 4220)
- Currently missing – Requirement for detection and alert technology to prevent “hot car” deaths of children and pets

Consumer Protections:

- Update safety databases and improve early warning requirements with deadlines for action rather than study the issue (Sec 4216 & Sec 4217)
- Require a comprehensive update of the New Car Assessment to Program (NCAP) and ensure that it adequately addresses the safety of VRUs (Sec. 4213)
- Currently missing – Provisions to prevent used vehicles with unrepaired safety recalls from being sold, leased or loaned

Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Upgrades:

- Require side and front underride guards on trucks (Sec. 3011) in addition to upgrading the rear guard standard
- Improve school bus safety by including requirements for seat belts, fire suppression and crash avoidance technologies, and curb school bus driver fatigue (Sec. 4110)
- Currently missing – Improve oversight of unsafe motor carriers by making all crash data available for public review and making carrier fitness ratings accurate

Oppose

Exemptions or Weakening of Hours of Service (HOS) Rules/Exacerbation of Truck Driver Fatigue:

Actions to weaken or circumvent HOS rules and electronic logging device (ELD) requirements are a persistent, anti-truck safety objective of some members of the industry. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has repeatedly cited fatigue as a major contributor to truck crashes and included reducing fatigue-related crashes on its Most Wanted List of Safety Changes. Actions must be taken to prevent rather than worsen this well-known and pervasive safety issue.

Permitting “Teen Truckers” to Operate in Interstate Commerce:

Younger commercial motor vehicle (CMV) drivers, permitted to drive in some states for intrastate travel, have higher crash rates. In fact, CMV drivers under the age of 19 are four times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes and CMV drivers between the ages of 19 and 20 are six times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes. The public, as well as safety, public health and consumer groups, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and OOIDA all oppose lowering the CDL age. Moreover, problems within the industry that create unsafe working conditions and create truck driver retention issues remain unaddressed.

Any Action to Increase, Circumvent or Provide Exemptions to Truck Size and Weight Limits or Axle Tolerances:

Bigger and heavier trucks endanger all motorists and disproportionately damage the infrastructure. Exemptions from federal truck size and weight limits severely diminish their effectiveness and compromise enforcement efforts. Any action to increase, circumvent or provide exemptions to truck size and weight limits or axle tolerances including state or industry carve-outs, pilot programs or other efforts should be rejected.

Changes To Further Weaken the Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) Program:

The CSA program is designed to identify high risk motor carriers for intervention and improved compliance. Unfortunately, some of the CSA data has been removed from public view since 2015. The data should be restored rather than further weakening the program.

Mass Exemptions from Safety Standards for Deployment of Autonomous Vehicles (AV):

Expanding the number of AVs that can be SOLD to the public under 49 USC 30113 that do not meet critical federal safety standards such as those that ensure occupant protection and crashworthiness, should not be permitted. Doing so will potentially unleash hundreds of thousands of vehicles equipped with technologies that are unproven and unregulated putting all road users at risk – both the occupants of the vehicles and other road users including bicyclists and pedestrians. Instead, commonsense safety regulations and industry oversight to ensure safe and equitable AV deployment should be advanced.

Efforts to Strike or Reduce Any Safety Provisions:

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently released 2020 preliminary estimates revealing 38,680 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes, marking the highest number of traffic fatalities since 2007 and a seven percent increase over 2019. The time for action is now and efforts to advance proven solutions should not be undercut or stricken.