



**STATEMENT OF
Commander Chris Olson, Oro Valley (AZ) Police Department
at Press Conference to Ensure Safety is Advanced in
Any Transportation/Infrastructure Package
July 20, 2021**

Good Morning. I am Commander Chris Olson of the Oro Valley Police Department in Arizona. I am also a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police Highway Safety Committee.

For many law enforcement officers and first responders, the roadways are our offices. Managing dangerous drivers is a common work hazard. I have lost many dedicated colleagues and attended far too many funerals for officers killed on our roads. Most recently, Officer (Ofc.) Jeremy Brinton, of the Nogales Police Department, and Ofc. Ginarro New, of the Phoenix Police Department, died in the line of duty. Ofc. Brinton was assisting with lane closures when he was struck by a distracted driver on May 20. He succumbed to his injuries, ending an 18-year career in law enforcement and leaving behind his wife and four children. Ofc. New had only served for two years when he was killed by a speeding red light runner on June 1.

Arriving at a catastrophic crash scene is always harrowing. I will never forget one particular gruesome fatal crash in Oro Valley. Paul Garcia and Caitlin Festerling were waiting to make a left-hand turn when their vehicle was hit from behind at 40 mph and pushed into oncoming traffic. They were just 22 and 21 years old. The driver of the other vehicle was on her phone. I had the responsibility of informing Paul and Caitlin's mothers about the death of their children. Much like my fellow speakers, they heroically have channeled their pain and grief to advocate for changes.

A common factor in all these crashes is that they likely could have been prevented or mitigated by lifesaving crash avoidance technology. I commend my fellow speakers, Chair Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) for sponsoring the 21st Century Smart Cars Act (H.R. 3628) to mandate crash avoidance technology in new cars, and Chairman Peter DeFazio, who shepherded the INVEST in America Act, H.R. 3684, the major transportation bill, to passage by the House on July 1. I also commend Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and Congresswoman Cheri Bustos (D-IL) for sponsoring the Protecting Roadside First Responders Act (S. 1386/ H.R. 2867) to mandate automatic emergency braking (AEB) and other safety technology on all new vehicles, both cars and trucks.

It is critically important the U.S. Senate bill be improved to match the safety language in the House's INVEST in America Act. Doing so will ensure the best version of the technology is equipped on new vehicles and will help to overcome some of the major causes of crashes such as speeding, distracted, drunk, drugged and drowsy driving. Let's get this over the finish line and put proven technology to use to end these horrific crashes, debilitating injuries and heartbreaking deaths.