



TAME HIGHWAY BULLIES - SUPPORT THE VEHICLE AGGRESSIVITY PROVISIONS IN KERRY-HOLLINGS



MAKING LIGHT TRUCKS LESS AGGRESSIVE WILL SAVE LIVES

Aggressive vehicles resulted from a design shortcut which must be corrected

In their haste to build and sell as many sport utility vehicles (SUVs) as possible, automakers never bothered redesigning the high, heavy, and stiff pickup truck chassis on which these “family” vehicles are built. The result: **millions of Americans now drive high-powered battering rams**, capable of inflicting devastating damage on other drivers in crashes.

Congress must act now to reduce the harm caused by crashes where Goliath tramples David. The Kerry-Hollings provisions would reduce vehicle aggressivity and increase compatibility among vehicles thereby saving thousands of lives.

Research shows SUVs are far more “aggressive” than passenger cars:

Because SUVs’ bumpers do not interact with the structures of most cars, thus overriding them in a crash, SUVs’ stiff frames do not crumple to absorb crash forces, and SUVs’ heavy bodies are difficult to slow and to control in emergency situations, these vehicles kill a disproportionate number of other drivers and passengers in crashes:

- ? Car drivers are 5 times more likely to die if their vehicle is struck from the side by an SUV rather than another car.
- ? The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) testified before the Senate Commerce Committee on 1/24/02 that “beyond about 4,000 pounds, increasing vehicle weight results in a net increase in fatalities,” meaning that the deaths caused by the heavier vehicle outweigh any safety benefits to its own occupants. Most SUVs are at least 4,000 lbs., and many are above that weight.
- ? As Keith Bradsher of the *New York Times* reported on May 12, 2000, “sport utilities are three times as likely as cars to kill the other driver in a crash, but the death rate for sport utility occupants is just as high as for car occupants because of sport utilities’ tendency to roll over and their lack of crumple zones.”

Detroit knows SUVs are antisocial but will not make these vehicles safe for other drivers without a regulatory incentive

Detroit is well aware of the problems their vehicles cause and the social responsibility they bear for correcting them. Still, automakers continue to drag their feet in making their most popular and profitable vehicles safe for society, and even continue to cite fallacious safety concerns as a reason for opposing new fuel economy standards.

- ? As Bradsher reported in the *New York Times* of August 4, 2000, “under Alex Trotman, Ford’s chairman and chief executive until his retirement at the end of 1998, the company contended that sport utility vehicles inevitably posed risks to other motorists and nothing could be done about this.”

Without immediate Congressional action, vehicles will become more aggressive, killing thousands

Without limits on vehicle aggressivity and improved compatibility between vehicles, Americans will be locked into a **Vehicle Arms Race** from which there is no turning back. If drivers believe they must defend themselves on the road, they will continue to buy heavier and less efficient vehicles, unwittingly increasing the national death toll.

We now have 8,000 pound SUVs, often carrying just a driver, sharing the highway with 2,500 pound passenger cars. With light trucks, the category of vehicles that includes SUVs and pickups, now accounting for 50 percent of new vehicles sold, this problem is only growing. This carnage is unnecessary, as making basic design changes to these vehicles would solve many of the problems.

The Kerry-Hollings language (currently Section 803(b) in Amendment 2917 to S. 517) is a reasonable solution to the problem of aggressivity

The Kerry-Hollings language reads:

“(b) **HEAVY VEHICLE HARM REDUCTION COMPATIBILITY STANDARD.--**

“(1) Within 3 years after the date of enactment of the Energy Policy Act of 2002, the Secretary, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, shall prescribe a federal motor vehicle safety standard under this chapter that will reduce the aggressivity of light trucks by 30 percent, using a baseline of model year 2002, and will improve vehicle compatibility in collisions between light trucks and cars, in order to protect against unnecessary death and injury.

“(2) The Secretary should review the effectiveness of this standard every five years following final issuance of the standard and shall issue, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, upgrades to the standard to reduce fatalities and injuries related to vehicle compatibility and light truck aggressivity.”.

The Kerry-Hollings provisions will make SUVs a more viable transportation option for Americans

The Kerry-Hollings provisions are aimed at improving the overall safety of our highways by reducing the aggressivity of all light trucks, including SUVs. If these measures are implemented, automakers will continue to sell SUVs, but without putting the lives of other drivers in danger.

This language is not a threat to the continued existence of the SUV, but an opportunity for America’s most popular vehicle to become less deadly. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has already completed much of the research needed to write the required regulations. A summary of their research to date is available at:

<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/departments/nrd-11/aggressivity/ag.html>

Congress should retain the aggressivity language in the Kerry-Hollings provisions, or thousands of innocent Americans will continue to be at risk of being killed in crashes with their fellow drivers, who are often unaware that they are behind the wheel of a deadly weapon.