

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 13, 2004

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
508 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Fritz Hollings
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
508 Dirksen Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sen. McCain and Hollings,

We are writing to express our strong support for enacting the motor vehicle safety provisions contained in Title IV of S. 1072, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFE-TEA).

Title IV's core provisions were reported out of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee with overwhelming bipartisan support, and subsequently incorporated into S. 1072 during floor debate. As adopted by the Senate, Title IV calls for the establishment of safety standards for a number of long-overdue National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) safety initiatives. These safety standards include: vehicle rollover prevention, side impact crash protection, occupant ejection prevention, vehicle-to-vehicle crash compatibility, 15-passenger van safety, child safety measures, and improved consumer access to safety information. Each of these individual provisions are designed to set goals for action while giving NHTSA flexibility in setting effective dates for the safety measures to be implemented, and to give motor vehicle manufacturers the freedom to choose the design or technology that best meets the performance standards that are adopted.

For years, and in some cases decades, these safety measures have been under consideration by NHTSA, but have not been implemented. Title IV of S. 1072 provides an effective roadmap to complete action on these important life-saving measures, and will offer much needed protection for the driving public.

In 2003, preliminary data show that over 43,220 people died and three million more were injured on our Nation's roads – the highest number since 1990. Some NHTSA forecasts indicate that this death toll could rise to as high as 50,000 annually by 2008. Despite hard work by NHTSA, manufacturers, safety groups, and state and local governments, traffic fatalities remain the leading cause of death for Americans age 4 to 34. Further, the agency has indicated that the largest share of the increase in fatalities each year is occurring in rollover crashes. These death and injury rates are, simply put, unacceptable.

The carefully crafted safety provisions in Title IV can help reverse this alarming trend, and save countless lives in the years ahead.

As conference committee consideration of the transportation bill nears, we strongly urge you to support the Senate-passed motor vehicle safety provisions in S. 1072, and to preserve these important safety benefits for the American driving public.

Very respectfully yours,

Mike DeLoe Jay Byrnes

Don Wynn John Dingell

Bill Nelson John Dingell

Maria Cantwell Mary L. Landrau

Patty Murray Susan Collins

Frank R. Lautenberg George V. Voinovich

Charles Schumer Paul Sarbanes

Rick Leger

Herb Kohl

Tom Harri

Robert A. Mchabhi

Sein Johann

J. Liden

Dir Dubin

Chris Dohm

Patrick Leahy

John Warner

Janne Kristin

Russell O'Fingold

Jack Reed

Peter Fein

Sam Bumbach

John Edwards

Pete G. Fitzgibbon

W. G. J.
Mark Dayton

Marc Boyer

Byron G. Davis

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Elizabeth Dole

P. L. Chafee

Allyson Hunter

N. A.

Joe Biden

Ed Kennedy

Barbara Boxer

Tom Vais