

# ROAD SAFE A M E R I C A

## Summer 2010 Newsletter

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## Do More Than Say “I love you ... be careful.”

Dear Friends:

Although the Memorial Day holiday celebrates the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform, it is also a somewhat grim milestone in the year for other reasons. The summer season from Memorial Day until Labor Day has been called the 100 deadliest days on American highways, during a time when we will drive more than one trillion miles.

When we send our children, friends and other loved ones off on their road trips this summer, we should remember the dangers they encounter as they travel American highways and do more than just say, “I love you...be careful.”

That’s what we said to our two sons when they drove away headed back to school after Thanksgiving break in 2002 and we took for granted they would be doing everything they could to be safe on the highways observing the safety conscious rules we had taught them. We knew they would watch their speed, wear their seatbelts and of course not drink alcohol while driving. What we didn’t count on was that they would become victims of someone else’s mistakes, someone else’s bad choices.

Their car – stopped in an interstate traffic jam – was crushed from behind by a speeding tractor-trailer rig barreling

along with its cruise control set at seven miles an hour above the posted speed limit. The crash killed Cullum, who was driving, and miraculously, thank God, Pierce was not seriously injured. We know no one deliberately sets out to do harm to others on the highways. We believe that the truck driver who killed our son regrets the pain he has caused. But Cullum was being safe, and yet a professional “on the job” made bad choices and cost our son his life on that Sunday after Thanksgiving.

Hopefully, the people you love will do all of the right things, the safe things, on the highways this summer. Doing the right things as a professional or amateur driver means truly embracing the principles of driving so that *you do no harm to another*, acknowledging that the actions we take behind the wheel can have devastating consequences.

Tell those you love that they must share the crowded highways with heavy commercial vehicles which weigh 20 times the weight of a passenger car. Let them know that these are huge machines, allowed by law to travel at the same speeds as passenger cars in all types of weather, day and night. Make them aware that these truckers are often exhausted from 14 hour work days and from the pressure of schedules for “just in time” deliveries.

At Road Safe America, a non-profit highway safety organization we founded after Cullum’s death, we try to educate the public about techniques for driving more safely around heavy commercial vehicles. In fatal crashes involving big-rigs and passenger vehicles, 98% of the time the people in the passenger vehicles are the victims.

Tell your loved ones getting on the road that being safe around big trucks includes observing rules like not tailgating, making sure you can see the driver’s rear-view mirrors when you are behind them (increasing the likelihood that the trucker can see you), never cutting in front of a big truck (they can’t stop quickly or maneuver as easily as passenger cars), avoiding driving beside them, and generally giving them plenty of space.

In America, our roads are more dangerous than those in Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan and other nations in the world because, unlike these countries, we have no requirement for heavy commercial vehicles to set their factory-installed electronic speed governors to limit their top speeds at safer levels. There is no requirement for “black boxes” (travel data recorders like on airliners), and there are not enough rest stops and designated rest areas off the highways for long-haul drivers to safely exit the road and get the sleep they need.

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# Road Safe America

(... continued from cover page)

Tell them that amazingly, some in Congress want to increase maximum weight for trucks on the road from the current 80,000 pounds to nearly 100,000 pounds, without a quid pro quo requirement for the (standard equipment) speed governors to be set. Sadly, while other leading nations have successfully taken aggressive action to reduce the incidence of car-truck crashes, the deaths of almost 5,000 people in crashes involving heavy commercial vehicles in the U.S. seem to have become acceptable here.

Following all of these safe driving tips is important, but in our opinion, driving safely around a large truck is an oxymoron. There is no true "safe zone". The best practice is to let them go around you or, if it is possible at a reasonable speed, pass the truck and put some distance between it and your car. It is unsafe to travel beside, behind or in front of a truck in close proximity.

Our sons were being safe—are our laws safe?

We don't want another family to experience the pain and sadness that we now face on a daily basis. We believe that amateur and professional drivers alike want to be safe and never injure or kill another as a result of a bad choice or from ignorance of existing dangerous conditions. We hope you agree and in addition to telling your loved ones to be careful, please join Road Safe America in our mission to make the roads safer for all.

Warm Regards,



Susan and Steve Owings

## Technology Advances: Beneficial but Costly

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration invited Road Safe America to participate in a workshop to envision the future of transportation. The workshop presented a truly futuristic environment where heavy commercial vehicles and cars are guided by wires embedded in the roadway, enforcement is delivered via radio signal, and tickets are delivered over the internet.

While looking toward the future is exciting, many attendees wrestled with the more immediate problem of making heavy commercial trucks safer using current technology. **Technologies such as roll-avoidance systems, lane departure systems, and GPS navigation with truck specific routes can save lives but they are costly.** Small owner-operated trucking companies cannot afford this technology which is considered to be a justifiable capital expense for large trucking companies.

Although this technology can benefit the transportation industry and highway safety, our federal government is not proposing either tax breaks or low-cost loans to encourage the adoption of this technology making it especially difficult for smaller operators to employ these safety advances.

Road Safe America will continue to explore ways in which this technology can become more affordable for all trucking companies for the benefit of the driving public.

## Did You Know?

Highway deaths *are* preventable—although most people think they are not preventable.

## Thank You for Your Generous Gifts

**Gifts received February 1,  
2010—April 30, 2010**

### Gifts of \$1,000 and more

Mr. & Mrs. Beaumont Allen  
Mr. & Mrs. Gene W. Milner, Jr.\*

### Gifts of \$500—\$999

Mr. & Mrs. David P. Fitzgerald\*  
Mr. & Mrs. Philip C. Henry  
Mr. Richard H. Lee  
Mr. & Mrs. William G. Mealor\*  
Mr. & Mrs. William Runge, III

### Gifts of \$250—\$499

Mr. & Mrs. John A. Hansen

### Gifts of \$100—\$249

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Dr. & Mrs. Louis L. Battey, Jr.  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Bell  
Ms. Lynn P. Cochran  
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Mr. & Mrs. Paul Hudson, Jr.  
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Mr. & Mrs. Kieran P. Quinn  
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Troutman

### Gifts up to \$99

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Mr. & Mrs. Kyle Flynn  
Mrs. Andrea Harrison  
Mr. & Mrs. Jim Irwin\*  
Mr. Herman Lenz  
Mr. & Mrs. J. Alex Porter  
Mr. & Mrs. Dale R. Warner  
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### Honor & Memorial Gifts

*In Honor of Frank Bazzel*  
Mr. & Mrs. Frank Troutman

### Matching Gifts

AON Foundation  
First Horizon  
National Corporation

**To give, please go to:**  
[www.roadsafeamerica.org](http://www.roadsafeamerica.org)

Visit our website at [www.roadsafeamerica.org](http://www.roadsafeamerica.org)

# Road Safe America

## RSA Opposes Heavier Trucks

Road Safe America recently attended a trucking industry conference where an executive with an otherwise progressive pro-safety firm spoke out in favor of 'more productive trucks'. Instinctively, people like to support increased productivity; however, in this case, increased productivity refers to super-heavy tractor-trailers allowed with no restrictions on our nation's roads.

It is time to bring some clarity to the discussion of "more productive" trucks. Currently, there are two bills being considered regarding the maximum weight of heavy commercial vehicles on America's Interstate Highway system. The most alarming bill is **H.R. 1799 which proposes that the heaviest vehicles be allowed to add 17,000 lbs. to the current weight of 80,000 lbs.** A second bill is asking that the current 80,000 lb. maximum weight limit stay in place. One of these bills will almost certainly be wrapped into the huge Highway Funding Bill to be considered later this year; there will be very little debate on the individual merits of either of these two bills at that time so it is important to address the merits of each now.

H.R. 1799, requesting an additional weight of almost 25%, is supported by the American Trucking Associations and the large fleets it represents. It's easy to understand how trucking management would prefer to pay a driver the same basic rate to transport more goods. **The rationale for this is that productivity will increase. This is true—but at what cost?**

It is said that the proposed additional axle necessary for these heavier rigs would add 20% more braking power and some insist that heavier trucks are actually safer because of this addi-

tional braking capacity. It is also argued that H.R. 1799 would result in fewer trucks carrying more cargo, thus making our roads less crowded. Additional arguments state that only the best drivers will remain in the workforce as those with less experience and questionable safety records would be forced out by diminished opportunity. Road Safe America along with other safety advocates and the railroad industry dispute these arguments. During the past 10 years auto travel increased only 3% while large truck traffic doubled.

Supporters of H.R. 1799 use statistics to endorse this bill citing the European Union which has seen improved safety with the heavier trucks on their roads. However, they "forget" to add that **trucks in Europe are using mandated advanced safety technology that many American fleets do not.** These technologies include the use of already installed speed governors on trucks set at 90 kph (56 mph) meaning the heavy loads can stop quicker. In addition, all of the heavy trucks in Europe are required to have electronic logging (black boxes) and it is specifically prohibited to pay truck drivers by the mile. These are the reasons that the heavier trucks are able to operate more safely in the European Union.

**The discussion about HR 1799 is not about safety or even productivity—it is about money and jobs.** The big fleets want the heavier trucks so they can spend less payroll dollars getting their goods across the country. The independent truckers and their lobbying arm want the bill killed because it might cost their members jobs. This is the safer alternative until we adopt the safety policies the European Union countries (and others) already have.

**Road Safe America proposes some common sense middle ground.** Let's first insist that all heavy commercial vehicles use their factory installed speed governors set at 65 mph or less. Many of America's safer fleets do this already. Then, if our roads and bridges can tolerate the weight increase, let's govern heavier trucks at 55 mph to ensure that safety is truly the first priority. Finally, let's require that truck drivers be paid like the professionals they are expected to be. Drivers should be paid not by the mile, but rather for hours on the job, whether driving or not. Otherwise, truck drivers will continue to have an incentive to speed and drive more hours than allowed which is clearly not in the public's best interest.

**Road Safe America is not anti-trucking but we are pro-safety.** Road Safe America puts the lives of motorists and truck drivers ahead of productivity and profits. We recognize that the trucking industry is a vital part of American commerce. Join us as we work to bring common sense practices to this critical part of our society's economic structure.

## Extraordinary Ambassadors

Road Safe America expresses sincere gratitude to Jennifer and Mark Pahl, Ambassadors from Oregon, who authored a letter to Congressman DeFazio challenging his position against a federal law requiring heavy commercial trucks to set their speed limiters at 65 mph or less.

Become a Road Safe America Ambassador and help us spread our message of highway safety in your state. Visit our website for more information.



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**Drive Safely this Summer;  
Buckle up, slow down, and  
stay alert.**

## **Road Safe America Supports Jason's Law**

In March of 2009 Jason Rivenburg, an independent truck driver and a young father, was killed as he rested in his big rig. According to his family, Rivenburg had pulled his tractor-trailer off the road into the only place available at the time, an abandoned gas station, for a little rest before making his early morning delivery. Rivenburg was murdered as he rested in his truck.

The trucking industry knows the dangers and expense of a 24-hour highway transportation system. It's time the driving public understood, too. Jason's Law is an attempt by Mr. Rivenburg's family and friends to bring federal attention to this important fact—**professional truckers need safe places to rest when not driving.**

Federal hours-of-service rules allow a driver to be moving eleven hours each day. For truckers who are involved in long-haul runs, this means they look for commercial truck stops or state operated rest areas to relax, eat, and sleep. It's dangerous enough to be driving a 80,000 lb. vehicle traveling at highway speed—**drivers shouldn't also have to worry about finding a safe place to get necessary rest.**

Road Safe America strongly supports the efforts of Congressman Paul Tonko of New York, Jason's home state, to pass Jason's Law. This law would require the Department of Transportation to use Federal funds to establish safe and adequate resting areas. **In today's difficult fiscal environment, too many states have found themselves desperate for funds and have chosen to close rest areas to save money.** While this decision may save money,

it is risking lives. A Federal law to add to and improve safe parking for truckers will absolve state governments from having to make such decisions.

The mission of Road Safe America is to reduce crashes between heavy commercial vehicles and passenger cars. Road Safe America supports the use of new technology and common sense laws to make our highways safer. **Jason's Law will help the professional trucker immediately, and having rested drivers behind the wheel will make all of us safer as we travel America's roadways.**

Please visit our website, [www.roadsafeamerica.org](http://www.roadsafeamerica.org) to learn more about Road Safe America and Jason's Law.

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