Dear Friends:

We want to recognize and thank the soon-to-be Senior Senator from Georgia, Johnny Isakson, for his help and attention to truck safety issues over the years. When Cullum was killed in 2002, Senator Isakson was then Congressman Isakson. He was one of the first Congressmen we met with when we began our efforts in Washington, D.C. Since then, Johnny has been very helpful with our work in his various roles as a member of the Commerce Committee and a liaison to the U.S. Department of Transportation. His staff is accommodating and helpful whenever we call upon them to ask for guidance on safety concerns.

We are extremely grateful to Senator Isakson for his intelligent and thoughtful leadership. His approach always comes from “seeking first to understand” and it is most impressive to see his attributes so well regarded and respected in the halls of Congress on “both sides of the aisle”. On behalf of the Road Safe America family, we thank you, Johnny, for your steadfast friendship. It is clear that you care deeply about road safety, not only for the citizens of Georgia, but also for all Americans.

Sincerely,

Susan and Steve Owings
Co-Founders, Road Safe America

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The U.S. Conference of Mayors Supports Speed Governors

In June, a resolution calling for the setting of speed governors on America’s heaviest commercial vehicles was passed at the 82nd annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. Atlanta’s Mayor, Kasim Reed, led this initiative at the request of Road Safe America.

Support from the U.S. Conference of Mayors is raising awareness of this important issue and helping us gain additional national support. Road Safe America would like to thank board members Sarah Kennedy and Thomas Worthy as well as fervent supporter Constance Lewis for their help with this effort. Most especially, we want to thank our Mayor, Kasim Reed, for his successful leadership on this essential matter.
Thank You!
Gifts received between 5/1/14-8/31/14

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*denotes a board member

Our Youngest Donor – Mitch Neel

Road Safe America would like to recognize our youngest donor, Mitch Neel. Mitch is a 6th grader at Christ the King School where both Cullum and Pierce Owings attended elementary school. Mitch heard about Cullum’s tragedy and the work that RSA is doing to make the roads safer and wanted “to help prevent further tragedies like Cullum’s”.

How impressive that Mitch, at such an early age, sees the importance and privilege of giving. Thank you, Mitch for being a positive role model for active citizenship.
Arguments Against Speed Governors Debunked

The only entity resisting the speed governor rule is the Owner Operator Independent Driver Association. Here are their top five arguments and our response to each.

1. Studies show that speed differentials lead to more collisions so it’s safer to keep traffic moving at the same speed.
   
   **Response:** These studies have a flawed presumption that everyone drives at the same speed (the speed limit). In reality we deal with as much as 30 mph speed differentials every day on our highways as there are those driving 55 mph, but also those traveling at much faster rates, up to 85+ mph. Clearly, the biggest, most dangerous vehicles (the ones weighing 80,000 lbs that need much further to stop in an emergency) should be in the slow/mid range of the speeds driven.

2. If all large trucks are governed, they will cause a tremendous traffic jam since they won’t be able to pass each other.
   
   **Response:** According to the American Trucking Associations, 70% of the U.S.’s largest trucks are already voluntarily governed between 60 mph and 68 mph. This has not led to any such enormous traffic jam. Big trucks really shouldn’t be passing each other much – that’s part of the point.

3. Studies show that car drivers cause most of the collisions with big trucks when there is a fatality.
   
   **Response:** This statistic is questionable since, when large trucks and cars collide in fatal crashes, in over 90% of cases, the only survivor is the truck driver. So the only version of what happened comes from the truck driver. In a similar study of non-fatal crashes by AAA, fault was found to be roughly 50/50 where both parties survive to relay crash specifics.

   The real problem is physics, not fault. Trucks weighing 80,000 lbs and traveling 60 mph have a force equal to the average car going over 300 mph. As truck speeds increase, not only force but also the stopping distance required, increases exponentially. Big rigs simply cannot stop in nearly the same distance as smaller vehicles in an emergency. Governing the top speed of heavy commercial trucks addresses this fundamental and deadly difference.

4. The largest trucks (Class 8) are really not over-represented in fatal crashes.
   
   **Response:** These trucks are only 1% of all vehicles, yet they are involved in more than 17% of multi-vehicle fatal crashes. Here is the breakdown: More than 32,000 people die on our roads annually. 19,000 of these deaths occur in single-vehicle crashes. And almost 3,000 of these deaths are from crashes involving tractor-trailers. 500 of those who die are truck drivers. The vast majority of the truck driver deaths are in single-vehicle accidents in which the driver, presumably, falls asleep. This leaves about 2,500 deaths that are multi-vehicle crash fatalities in which practically all of the deceased are in the cars. That represents over 17% of all the multi-vehicle crash deaths in our country.

5. It’s the States’ right to set speed limits.
   
   **Response:** Speed governors have nothing to do with speed limits. Speed limit signs will not need to be changed. This simply sets an electronically controlled top speed for the heaviest commercial vehicles that need a much greater distance to stop safely in an emergency than smaller passenger cars.
Morgan Crash Puts Truck Safety in the National Spotlight

Truck safety has recently found itself in the national spotlight. Sadly, the crash involving actor/comedian Tracy Morgan has brought several truck safety issues to the forefront of the news. In June, a limo van carrying Tracy Morgan and his friends was rear-ended by a tractor-trailer, which was traveling 20 mph over the speed limit. The driver of the truck had been awake for over 24 hours and had already logged 13.5 hours of work on his shift.

Tragically, the crash resulted in one fatality and injured several including Mr. Morgan. The initial collision also caused secondary crashes with other vehicles since traffic had slowed down due to a construction zone. These circumstances are eerily similar to those involved in the crash that killed Cullum Owings.

4,000 people die and 100,000 are injured in similar crashes every year in America. When this happens to a celebrity, the temporary focus from the media can make the circumstances seem extraordinary. But they are not. Collisions like this are commonplace – they happen every day on our highways. Fortunately, with the proper policies in place, these crashes can be significantly reduced.

Ensuring the speed governors on trucks are set at a reasonable top speed and preventing driver fatigue by electronically logging work and drive time are two of RSA’s key goals. RSA will continue to urge policy makers to take action on speed governors, allowable trucker drive time, and mandatory rest periods. These initiatives, when realized, will save lives.