

Remarks Delivered by
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Washington Regional Alcohol Program
30th Annual Luncheon
WRAPPY Awards
Washington, DC
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Today is about saying thank you and recognizing good deeds and hard work. I'd like to start by thanking Kurt Erickson for inviting me here today to be a part of the WRAPPY awards luncheon. It is truly my pleasure to congratulate WRAP on its 30th anniversary.

It is amazing that this program started out as just an idea a couple of friends had while sitting around the kitchen table. Look at it now—still going strong 30 years later. It is astonishing that an organization with such a small staff has had such a huge positive impact for so long. And best of all, you're not letting up.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to WRAP's staff of three very hardworking individuals: Ms. Robin Black, Ms. Marcela Martinez, and of course, Mr. Kurt Erickson.

I also want to applaud WRAP's Board of Directors, this dedicated group of individuals who are driven by a passion to make the roadways in and around our nation's capital safe, and who invest so much of their time and energy into this important work.

As a Nation, there's no question that we've made tremendous progress in our fight against impaired driving over the last 30 years. That progress in large part is due to the hard work of safety organizations such as WRAP, and the individuals in this room today who have taken such a strong stand on this important issue.

As we know so well, the overwhelming majority of traffic deaths and injuries in this country are the result of risk-taking and dangerous behavior. Too many drivers are making the same bad decisions over and over: They choose to drive impaired, drive too fast, or not wear a seatbelt.

So even as we've made progress in reducing highway fatalities over the years, for NHTSA and for WRAP our work is far from over. We truly are team mates in this important work of raising awareness about the dangers of drunk driving, especially among younger drivers.

One countermeasure we know that really helps to reduce alcohol-related fatalities is high visibility enforcement. High-visibility safety campaigns that combine media messages with rigorous enforcement efforts have proven effective in changing drivers' minds about speeding, impaired driving, and seat belt use.

Twice every year, around Labor Day and the holiday season, NHTSA supports a national “Drive Sober Or Get Pulled Over” campaign of high-visibility enforcement and media messaging. This past Labor Day, 10,000 police departments and law enforcement agencies across the country participated in our effort to get impaired drivers off our roads.

My sincere thanks to all of the officers here today and the agencies they represent for their dedication to saving lives on the Washington Metropolitan Area roadways and for making the DC Metro Area a safer place for everyone. Thank you for your steadfast support and active participation in the national impaired driving and seat belt enforcement crackdowns and the NHTSA Region 3’s Checkpoint Strikeforce campaign.

You know, Secretary LaHood and I host a lot of media events to underscore the importance of safe driving, such as “Click It Or Ticket” and “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over.” I can tell you that we always want our law enforcement partners out there on the plaza with us, backing us up with lights flashing. Trust me, it sends the right message.

I am so appreciative of all of you at WRAP, who have been instrumental in promoting the national crackdowns on impaired driving and the Checkpoint Strikeforce Campaign for the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia’s impaired driving programs. You have played a vital role in getting the message out to the public that if you drive drunk you will be arrested and prosecuted.

Impaired driving remains a serious, unacceptable threat to our families and our communities. In fact, 70 percent of deaths in alcohol-impaired driving crashes in 2010 involved drivers with a blood alcohol level that was nearly twice the .08 limit. It is also important to note that 31 percent of total traffic fatalities in 2010 involved a driver with a BAC of .08 or higher, and that figure has not changed in almost five years.

The latest numbers tell us people are not only making poor decisions about drinking and driving—they are getting deeply intoxicated before getting behind the wheel.

Thanks to the dedication and hard work of law enforcement and safety partners like WRAP, we've

made significant progress in reducing roadway deaths in recent years, but I think we all understand that there is still more work ahead of us.

I would like to conclude by recognizing the many other programs WRAP has initiated and supported over the years. These include youth programs, your Safe and Vital Employees program, your Law Enforcement Awards in Excellence Program, and of course, the award-winning SoberRide program.

Since its inception in 1993, SoberRide has provided some 55,000+ free cab rides home for would-be impaired drivers. Getting 55,000 impaired drivers off the road is a significant and inspiring accomplishment and I commend you for creating this fantastic program.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone in this room. You are the reason WRAP just keeps getting stronger—reaching more people, raising awareness of the dangers of driving impaired, and making our nation’s capital a safer place to travel.

Thank you so much!