

Remarks Prepared for

Administrator Strickland

for the

"Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest."

Press Event

Washington, DC

August 25, 2010

Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us. Before we proceed, I'd like to acknowledge some very dedicated highway safety professionals with us today. I am honored to welcome Governors Highway Safety Association Chairman Vernon Betkey, and Captain Edmund (Ed) Leonard, District Commander, from the Loudoun County, Virginia Sheriffs' Office.

I'd also like to acknowledge Mothers Against Drunk Driving President Laura Dean Mooney – she wanted to be here as well, but could not get here from Texas in time. We appreciate everything they do and the support of all of our safety partners.

As we approach the last few weeks of summer and Labor Day weekend, millions of American families will hop in their cars and head off to the beach, the lake, the mountains, the park, and elsewhere for some late-summer fun.

It's a time-honored tradition – and a great way to spend those final days before the kids head back to school. Wherever your vacation plans take you, we want you to arrive safely.

Follow the rules of the road. Obey local speed limits.

Wear a seatbelt. And above all, never drive drunk.

While many Americans have taken this message to heart, impaired driving remains a very serious problem. Today, we are releasing a new survey showing that 80 percent of the public views drunk driving as a “major threat.”

They are right to be scared. An estimated 17.2 million people acknowledged they drove drunk on U.S. roads during the prior 12 months.

I was extremely disappointed to find out that 8 percent of the population over the age of 16 rode in a vehicle with a driver who they thought had consumed too much alcohol.

If that doesn't scare you, think about this. While few of the 16-to-20 year old survey respondents reported drinking and driving, those who did averaged more than 5 drinks per sitting. While each drinking episode does not lead to a drinking and driving scenario, it does suggest that when young people decide to combine the two, it is a recipe for disaster.

We have got to do more to close the gap between believing drunk driving is a threat and actively doing something about it.

I am encouraged to read survey results showing that most drivers believe checkpoints are effective and should be conducted on a weekly or monthly basis.

Two-thirds want the penalties for violating drinking and driving laws to be more severe. State lawmakers should take note that 63 percent believe ignition interlocks would be a very effective intervention tool.

Drunk driving is dangerous; it's illegal and often deadly. We know it. You know it. And that is why, for the seventh year in a row, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has worked with local law enforcement agencies across the Nation to crack down on drunk driving. During this Labor Day period, if you're "over the limit, you're under arrest."

Once again, law enforcement officers are putting themselves on the front lines of this crackdown. They are hard at work to get drunk drivers off the roads and save lives that otherwise might be lost.

Across the Country, you can expect to see them out in full force with sobriety checkpoints, saturation patrols and undercover officers—if they catch you driving drunk, they will arrest you and they will prosecute you—no exceptions.

The *Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest.* law enforcement crackdown will run through Labor Day and involve 11,000 agencies from across the Nation. Enforcement efforts are supported by \$13 million in local and national advertising.

Drunk driving is one of the most serious and preventable dangers we face on our roadways. And I am asking you to do something about it. Behavior is an individual choice. Making our roads safe for our families starts with personal responsibility... putting our children in car seats and booster seats... buckling up ourselves... and giving the keys to someone else when we've had too much to drink, or taking the keys from a friend or relative who has had too much to drink.

So please: Drive safely. And enjoy the last weeks of summer.