

**Remarks prepared for
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

**Phelps Architecture, Construction, and Engineering
High School Awards Ceremony**

Washington, DC

June 22, 2010

Thank you for your warm welcome and for the invitation to join you. I am so proud to be here to participate in the Phelps Awards Ceremony with each and every one of you.

When you chose Phelps, you chose to challenge yourself with an education anchored in math and science. Your choice reveals you as builders and thinkers. When I learned of the awards that many of you will receive today, I was even more impressed with your drive, your passion for your field, and your willingness to give it your all.

Perhaps most importantly, Phelps High has shown you that an education is not something you receive; it is a knowledge base you build, one project, one experience, one idea at a time. And as your own dreams and hopes take shape, you will discover just how much this collective environment and community gave of themselves to you.

Congratulations to everyone in this school community.

**Congratulations to the faculty, the staff, the parents
who provide you with these opportunities.**

**Congratulations to the students and to the sponsors
and mentors who gladly share their expertise.**

The activities and programs you participate in here are equipping you with far more than just the technical knowledge required to complete the assignment. You are learning teamwork, time management and organizational skills, and the importance of challenging yourselves. You have also learned to persevere.

The Phelps FIRST Robotics Team persevered. After placing second to last in the 2009 competition, you came back this year to finish 3rd overall. You accomplished this with “Gracious Professionalism.”

The engineers involved in this project with NHTSA tell me that within weeks of opening in 2008, your school had formed the Phelps Robotics Team and started actively recruiting sponsors. This shows the drive of this school and this community.

To participate in competitions like this, let alone succeed, you need a strong foundation of support from a lot of people. I'm talking about your fellow students, your parents, your school faculty, the team mentors, and the volunteers. They share in your success today, and I hope you thanked them profusely along the way.

As I look at all of you, I'm wondering which one of you will be working an underwater robot some day, to successfully cap a gushing oil well. Or which one of you will help save the lives of troops with your work. Or maybe, which one of you will go on to design the next generation Mustang. It does not matter. What matters is that everything that each one of you does from here out will be shaped and guided by the foundation you build at right here Phelps High School.

And as far as I can tell, that is a good thing.

Remember the lessons you learn here. Remember them well. Fierce competition and mutual gain are not mutually exclusive. In whatever you do, you can make a contribution to society and act with integrity and sensitivity.

Phelps High School, congratulations on all of your hard work. Thank you.