

**ORAL TESTIMONY  
FOR  
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ADMINISTRATOR  
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TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN  
DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
HEARING ON  
*NHTSA FY 2011 BUDGET REQUEST*  
March 25, 2010**

Good morning Chairman Olver, Ranking Member Latham, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the President's FY 2011 Budget request of \$877.6 million for the Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Transportation safety is the Department's highest priority. NHTSA's safety programs are an integral part of addressing that priority.

NHTSA's programs work. And they work well. We are extremely proud of the broad spectrum of programs that address both behavioral and vehicle-related causes of highway deaths, and we devote much time and energy to the lynchpin of all our programs: good data, good science, and careful engineering. It has always been this way at NHTSA, and we believe that these programs are making a difference in saving lives and reducing injuries to the American public.

Three weeks ago, the Secretary released numbers that show a continuing dramatic reduction in the overall number of highway deaths.

Our analysis projects that traffic fatalities have declined for the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive quarter, and will be 33,963 in 2009, the lowest annual level since 1954. In terms of lives lost per 100 million vehicle miles traveled, the number of deaths dropped to 1.16, again the lowest level on record. This was almost a 9 percent drop in fatalities in one year, and this followed a 10 percent drop the year before.

Your ongoing support of this Agency and its important safety mission over the years is paying off for the American public. I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of this Subcommittee for your unwavering support of the NHTSA budget requests made over the years.

Are we winning the battle? Not yet. The loss of more than 33,000 people in traffic-related crashes in a single year represents a serious public health problem to our Nation. We will not rest until that number is zero. We cannot and will not relent in any one area and we must remain flexible and capable of rising quickly to meet new challenges.

In short, we must do more. So once again, we ask for your support.

The FY 2011 Budget proposed by the President is a good budget that allows us to continue moving forward in our mission in a responsible and thoughtful manner. The request before you adds 66 more employees. We will target these positions to meet our program needs.

NHTSA has a diverse and experienced workforce and we take full advantage of their skills, talents, and expertise. If, as we go forward, we find that we need to shore up our workforce in certain areas, I will appear before you again to identify the level of resources we need so that our safety mission is never compromised in any manner.

Mr. Chairman, our budget does not sacrifice safety in any manner, and fully continues the programs and activities that have been responsible for the remarkable reductions in fatalities over the past few years that I just referenced.

Because of funding anomalies during the past few years, it may appear that we are cutting spending in some areas and increasing it in others. We are allocating and tracking the money, carefully and wisely, in order to maintain our program flexibility and effectiveness.

That flexibility is part and parcel of this Agency's success. We are delivering on our mission. For example, we are working with the Environmental Protection Agency, and we will deliver on President Obama's call for a strong and coordinated national policy for fuel economy and greenhouse gas emission standards for motor vehicles, and we will do so in a way that does not compromise safety. We expect to issue the final rule on CAFE on April 1.

We are on track to roll out our enhanced government 5-star safety ratings system with the 2011 model year vehicles. For the new ratings, we made changes to the existing front and side crash ratings programs.

We added a family of crash test dummies and a side impact pole test to increase occupant safety. We established an overall safety score that will combine the star ratings from the front, side, and rollover programs. Finally, the Agency also implemented a program that we hope will encourage the demand for and use of advanced crash avoidance technologies.

The Agency is planning a communications program to ensure the American public understands why some of the new ratings are lower but more rigorous, and that those lower star ratings do not mean the vehicles are less safe than they were a year ago.

Time is lives saved in highway safety. The sooner we know where the problems are, or how well we are doing, the more quickly we can react. For example, the good-news statistics I mentioned at the beginning of my testimony are another programmatic success for the Agency.

We derive our early fatality projections from the early Fatality Analysis Reporting System, FastFARS, a relatively new program that this subcommittee provided funds to initiate.

FastFARS allows us to make fatality projections much earlier and more accurately than we've ever been able to previously.

And because we can measure the progress faster, we can know, that much more quickly, if we're on the right track or if we have areas that need more attention.

During my tenure, I want to work with the Secretary and the Congress to strengthen and improve NHTSA so that it can continue to achieve its mission of saving lives, preventing injuries, and reducing economic costs due to road traffic crashes. We will remain accountable to the President, the Congress, the Secretary of Transportation, and to the American public, whom we are proud to serve.

Thank you and I look forward to answering your questions.