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Statement by the Honorable Bobby L. Rush, Chairman

Energy and Commerce Committee Subcommittee on
Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection

Hearing: NHTSA Oversight: The Road Ahead

March 11, 2010

WASHINGTON — “Good morning. The Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection will now come to order. The focus of today’s hearing is the “The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration Oversight: The Road Ahead.”

“The goal of today’s hearing is to assess NHTSA’s functionality and its effectiveness. Last month, I promised America’s motorists, passengers, and pedestrians that as this Subcommittee takes up its jurisdictional responsibility to reauthorize NHTSA, we would do so with a spirit of working to help NHTSA regain the public’s confidence.

“This is our first occasion to welcome NHTSA’s newest Administrator, Mr. David Strickland, into our midst.

“Although Administrator Strickland’s first few months at NHTSA’s helm have been rocky and filled with difficult challenges, I know him to be a highly intelligent, thoughtful and capable professional. I expect that he will “shoot straight” with us, today, as we begin the important work of crafting reauthorization legislation that the Members of this Subcommittee can quickly support and move through the Committee and, indeed, through Congress.

“I look forward to listening to both witness panels and hearing their views on what NHTSA is currently doing—through its crash data analysis, research, and rulemakings—to promote vehicle safety.

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“Although I am, typically, not very stringent about enforcing time restrictions on Member statements and questioning, I will not hesitate to drop the gavel, today, to keep us ‘on point’ as much as possible. We have a lot of ground to cover and I expect a number of Members will want to participate. I would ask my colleagues for their understanding and cooperation.

“Before I yield my time, I’d like to say a few words about the scope of today’s hearing.

“This *is not* a hearing about Toyota’s recalls or its practices. Please try to restrain yourselves from veering too far away from our purpose of examining *NHTSA’s* configuration, *its* organization, and *its* performance in the areas of defects investigation, safety standards and enforcement.

“I want to thank all of our witnesses for taking the time out of their busy schedules to advise the Members of this Subcommittee. Let us work collaboratively and constructively to ensure that NHTSA has on hand the necessary resources *and* capacity to fulfill its stated mission.

“That mission, of course, is focused on saving lives, preventing injuries, and reducing economic costs, due to vehicle traffic crashes through education, research, safety standards and enforcement activity.

“Thank you, again. And, with that, I yield the balance of my time.”

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