



July 26, 2010

The Honorable Henry Waxman, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman:

I write today on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind to urge Congress to pass the Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 2010.

The number of hybrid and electric vehicles on America's roadways is expected to increase dramatically in the coming years. These vehicles pose an unintended threat to blind pedestrians, who use the sound of vehicle engines to determine the presence, direction, and speed of individual vehicles and to discern traffic patterns. Cyclists, runners, small children, and other pedestrians may also be caught unaware by these silent vehicles, resulting in serious injury.

Section 110 of the Motor Vehicle Safety Act directs the Department of Transportation to address the threat posed by silent vehicle technology. Specifically, this section of the bill requires the establishment of a motor vehicle safety standard requiring a minimum level of sound to be emitted by all hybrid and electric cars, after an appropriate period of scientific study. There would also be a phase-in period for automobile manufacturers to comply with the new standard. Both the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers and the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers endorse this section of the bill.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has already warned of the danger posed by silent cars. In a study released last fall, the agency found that these vehicles were nearly twice as likely to be involved in collisions with pedestrians and cyclists when performing certain low-speed maneuvers. Setting a minimum sound standard for all new hybrid and electric automobiles will ensure that blind people can continue to travel safely and independently, as well as protect all other Americans.

The National Federation of the Blind fully supports the Motor Vehicle Safety Act and we urge Congress to consider and pass this legislation quickly.

Thank you for your consideration regarding this critical safety issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Marc Maurer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marc Maurer, President
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

cc: The Honorable Cliff Stearns
The Honorable Edolphus Towns

Marc Maurer, President

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