

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “Motor Vehicle Safety Provisions in House and
Senate Highway Bills”
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
March 22, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Blackburn and Ranking Member Butterfield, for holding this hearing.

In the last Congress, the Energy and Commerce Committee examined the massive Toyota recalls and the government’s slow response to sudden unintended acceleration. We examined the reforms needed at NHTSA.

The Committee passed the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, which I introduced to make sure NHTSA has the expertise to keep pace with emerging technologies and stronger enforcement authority to ensure timely and effective recalls.

Many of the provisions of this bill are included in the bipartisan Senate transportation bill. I would like to thank Chairmen Rockefeller and Pryor, the Senate sponsors of the provisions, for their leadership in moving this legislation forward.

The Senate bill includes provisions to improve electronics expertise at NHTSA. It also mandates new safety standards to reduce the risk of sudden acceleration as well as standards for electronics systems performance.

The bill includes measures to improve accountability, with a higher cap on civil penalties and a requirement that auto safety officials certify the accuracy of information given to the agency.

The bill also includes provisions to improve transparency. This includes measures to give consumers easier access to recall information, safety bulletins prepared by manufacturers, and the early warning data companies submit to help NHTSA identify defect trends.

All of these provisions are similar to ones we considered in this Committee last Congress. And they are all important safety measures.

In addition, the Senate reauthorization bill requires important new standards for child safety seats and booster seats in particular. It also includes mandates for strong motorcoach safety standards that are desperately needed but have languished at NHTSA for years. I would like to thank my colleague Congressman John Lewis for his steadfast efforts to press for action on this issue.

Let me close by thanking Administrator Strickland for his testimony today. Your leadership, together with Secretary LaHood, has reenergized the agency. While we take great pride in the sustained decline in vehicle fatalities, we must continue to look for opportunities to save more lives.