

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE OBAMA AND MCCAIN CAMPAIGNS

**From Stephen C. and Susan P. Owings
Co-founders, Road Safe America**

New president urged to support truck speed limiters; Cost-free method to reduce fatalities and save fuel

Dear Senators Obama and McCain:

Congratulations on winning your party's nomination for President of the United States. We wish you continued success as you campaign to advance your vision for a safe, free, and prosperous America.

Before the November election, we at Road Safe America wanted to provide you with some of the facts you will need so that the next administration can begin to seriously address one of our nation's greatest tragedies: the violent death of nearly 5,000 people in highway crashes involving big trucks every year.

Road Safe America is a national non-profit advocacy organization focused on increasing safety for everyone on our nation's highways and interstates. We founded Road Safe America after our son, Cullum, was killed in 2002 when his car – stopped in an interstate traffic jam – was crushed from behind by a speeding tractor trailer truck using cruise control.

Please consider the facts:

- We have been successful the past three years in working with the United States Senate to declare the Sunday after Thanksgiving – the busiest highway traffic day of the year – as “Drive Safer Sunday” so that everyone can be reminded of the need to drive alertly and carefully on our nation's roads and highways on this very congested day. The Sunday after Thanksgiving in 2002 was the day our son was killed.
- For two years, Road Safe America has had a petition pending before the U.S. Department of Transportation calling for mandatory speed governor activation on all Class 7 and 8 trucks (over 13 tons in weight). We are being supported in the initiative by all national safety advocacy organizations, the American Trucking

Associations, numerous trucking firms, insurance companies and countless citizens. And yet, the Secretary of Transportation has gone on record as opposing mandatory speed governor activation on big trucks. We hope this poor judgment will change in the next administration.

- Reducing truck speeds through the activation of speed governing technology is already accepted by many trucking firms as a way to cut fuel use as well as improve safety. With a reduction of only 5 mph, millions of gallons of fuel can be saved annually in the nation's trucking fleet – in addition to saving untold numbers of lives.
- The European Union, Australia, Japan and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec have regulations requiring speed limiting devices set well below 68 mph on all large trucks. Sadly, instead of showing international leadership, the U.S. is behind the rest of the world on this issue.
- According to Australian government statistics, Australia experienced a reduction of 26.5 percent in heavy truck fatalities between 2002 and 2004 through speed governor requirements, aggressive fatigue management programs, random drug testing and seatbelt promotion within the trucking industry.
- When an airliner goes down and 200 people perish, it is national news for weeks. But when twice that many are killed every month in crashes involving big trucks, where is the outcry?
- Large trucks need two to three times the distance that cars need to stop.
- The fatal crash rate for large trucks is greater than for all other vehicles on the road.
- 98 percent of the time, people who die in tractor-trailer-auto crashes are the ones in the passenger cars.
- To equal the G-force of a fully loaded big rig traveling at 70 miles per hour, an average sized auto would have to be traveling over 360 miles per hour.
- Most truck drivers are paid by the mile, pushed to drive faster and farther, for more hours at a time than the law allows.

- More truck drivers die on the job than nearly any other vocation. With more than 800 truckers killed in highway crashes annually, it's one of the deadliest professions in America.

No one at Road Safe America is anti-trucking or anti-trucker. In fact, the opposite is the case. Trucking is an absolutely vital industry to the economic health and prosperity of our nation. However, by reducing a truck's speed, we know that many more drivers will make it home to their families at the end of a long run, and more motorists will live to see their loved ones again as well.

Thank you for considering these facts as the campaign quickly draws to a close and the next administration takes the reins in developing national transportation policies that will reduce death and injury on our roads and highways and create a greener future as countless gallons of gasoline are saved through responsible speed governance. Our hope is that we at Road Safe America can be a non-partisan resource for you with regard to any matters related to the safety of our nation's highways and interstates. If we or our organization can be of assistance to you in any way, we hope you will have staff contact us immediately.
