

Distracted Driving Remains Serious Highway Safety Challenge

Statement for Attribution to Vernon F. Betkey, Jr., Chairman, Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA)

WASHINGTON, DC -- I am delighted to join Secretary LaHood at the Department of Transportation today. GHSA is extremely grateful to Secretary LaHood and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for their national leadership in raising awareness of the distracted driving problem.

Distracted driving is an emerging problem but a significant highway safety issue. According to NHTSA, in 2008, nearly 6,000 people were killed in crashes in which distracted or inattentive driving was a factor. However, we know that this is underreported because distracted driving data is difficult to collect.

Certainly most of the attention has been on texting and driving but there are a host of other distractions including cell phone calls (both handheld and hands-free) as well as more traditional ones such as eating, adjusting the radio, using the CD player or talking to passengers. Drivers need to be reminded to manage these distractions safely.

States are reacting quickly to driver distraction---30 have banned texting for all drivers ---10 already in 2010. As more data and research become available, we expect states to continue to act promptly. For a full list of state laws regulating texting and cell phone use while driving, visit: www.ghsa.org/html/stateinfo/laws/cellphone_laws.html.

State highway safety agencies are committed to addressing driver distraction through a comprehensive approach including laws, education, enforcement, employer policies and the use of technology. Just two weeks ago, GHSA released a new report detailing state distracted driving countermeasures. The report shows that states are implementing many strategies to begin to turn the tide against distraction. The report is online at www.ghsa.org/html/publications/survey/index.html.

The federal and state governments are not trying to inconvenience drivers. Rather, we are trying to save their lives. No call, text, or any other distraction is worth a life or serious injury.

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For more information about the event at the Department of Transportation, visit www.dot.gov.