

GHSA Applauds Historic Highway Safety Progress

Statement for Attribution to Barbara Harsha, Executive Director, Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA)

WASHINGTON, DC -- We are delighted with the news that highway deaths fell to 33,808 in 2009--the lowest number since 1950. This is particularly encouraging given that estimated vehicle miles traveled actually increased slightly in 2009, thus exposing the public to greater risk on our roadways.

It is very encouraging that fatalities have declined in all categories and vehicle types. It is also a sign of great progress that reductions were achieved in forty-one states, Washington, D.C. and Guam.

We attribute the progress to a host of factors, including increased seat belt use, stronger enforcement of drunk driving laws, better roads, safer vehicles and an increasingly well-coordinated approach to safety among state stakeholders and the federal government. Secretary LaHood's focus on distracted driving has brought an unprecedented focus to behavioral highway safety, and as a result, lives are being saved.

GHSA is especially pleased by the news that motorcycle deaths have declined by 16 percent--the first decline in 11 years. Earlier this year, GHSA reported that a similar decline was being projected based on early state data. While we do not want to make broad generalizations about one-year's worth of data, we are hopeful this is a turning point.

While the overall news is good, far too many of our families continue to lose loved ones in traffic crashes. To build on this momentum and continue progress, GHSA's 2010 Annual Meeting will bring state, federal and private sector partners together to address strategies for further fatality reductions. This year's meeting is themed "Technology and Highway Safety: What's Driving Our Future?" GHSA wants to see better use of technology to address distracted driving, drunk driving, speeding, red light running and other highway safety challenges. More information about the Annual Meeting is available online at www.ghsa.org.

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