



ADVOCATES
for Highway & Auto Safety

STATEMENT
JUDITH LEE STONE, PRESIDENT
ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY
In Support Of
U.S DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION'S DISTRACTED DRIVING
CAMPAIGN
Wednesday, July 7, 2010

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, a coalition of consumer, public health, medical and safety groups, and insurance companies working together to enact strong auto and highway safety laws and regulations, once again expresses strong support for U.S. DOT Secretary Ray LaHood's campaign to stop distracted driving through heightened awareness, tough enforcement, and – most importantly – stronger laws.

In the face of efforts to undermine his significant year-long efforts to advance safety on several fronts of the battles against distracted driving, Secretary LaHood came out forcefully today in favor of stepped-up lobbying for texting and cell phone use bans and other anti-distraction measures throughout the nation. This is the kind of leadership we need to really make a difference in saving lives on our nation's highways.

When Advocates first became aware last week of an emerging coalition in opposition to DOT's efforts, we immediately notified our Board of Directors comprised of representatives of leading consumer groups and insurance companies of the need to say a loud and clear "no" if asked to participate in the new coalition, and we publicly stated our position. Some members of Advocates' Board were actually mentioned in the strategy memo as target recruits for the coalition, despite the fact they were early and strong supporters of Secretary LaHood's campaign. The text of the memo sent to Advocates' Board outlining obvious reasons why it was a very bad idea to consider membership in the new coalition is attached.

Advocates is currently working to adopt state and federal anti-distracted driving laws, including the Safe Teen and Novice Driver Uniform Protection (STANDUP) Act of 2010 (HR 1895 and S.3269) that would both restrict the number of teen passengers and prohibit the use of cell phones except in emergencies by teens learning to drive.

I was quoted in a news article about the proposed coalition last week that I hoped the coalition would die on the vine. According to news articles today, that has happened. This is a good ending to a very short story.

**Text of Email to Board of Directors of Advocates for Highway & Auto
Safety
Warning of Possible Membership Solicitation from New Coalition Opposing
Secretary LaHood's Distracted Driving Campaign
From Judith Lee Stone, President
Tuesday, June 29, 2010**

It has just come to my attention that a group(The Drive Coalition)comprised of industry and other interests is forming to prevent further curbs on certain types of distracted driving. Apparently in addition to others they are targeting insurance companies to join with them in opposition to Secretary LaHood's (and Oprah Winfrey's) campaigns to reduce distracted driving involving cell phone use and other technologies. It is disappointing that former NTSB Chairman, Jim Hall, has agreed to lead this new coalition.

They have a plan to solicit membership from various insurance companies, other business and safety interest groups. We would not consider being part of such a group and advise our Board members to review the following facts and say "no" to membership in the coalition:

-- The goals of this coalition are contradictory to Advocates' and other safety groups' program goals. Federal estimates are that nearly 6000 people died and approximately one-half million were injured in 2008 in crashes involving distractions;

-- Their own materials call this coalition "a cover for industry";

-- LaHood has been very open and aggressive about what his position is since last fall and many members of Advocates and other companies, organizations and trade associations have joined with him in supporting and advancing distracted driving countermeasure programs, model laws, and victims groups to "put a face on" the issue;

-- We honored Secretary LaHood at our 20th Anniversary reception on May 26 for his leadership and we support numerous state and federal legislative efforts on distracted driving. Senator Rockefeller's legislation on distracted driving was recently reported out of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and at our urging included several key teen driving provisions related to distracted driving;

-- Enforcement and education (the new coalition goals) are key components to changing behavior, but they are ineffective without strong laws. Only the combination of the three in regular and systematic campaigns - laws, education and enforcement - will change cultural thinking and dangerous behaviors;

-- Coalition organizers are concerned about GPS and other technologies being targeted besides cell phones - Advocates has petitioned the federal government (FMCSA within U.S. DOT) to study the use of all of these technologies in commercial vehicles because we know they distract. Rather than excluding these technologies we need the government to determine which of them are the most distracting and which should be prohibited and/or restricted;

-- Membership in this coalition seems neither a good safety nor political decision for any organization.

Please let me know if you have questions or comments.

Judie