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MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, CONSUMER SAFETY ADVOCATES URGE PASSAGE OF MOTORCOACH SAFETY BILL

WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-GA) today announced the formal introduction of comprehensive motorcoach safety legislation. The legislation would overhaul and dramatically increase the safety of motorcoaches to reduce deaths and serious injuries caused by accidents.

“This bill would make common-sense safety improvements to protect passengers,” said Brown. “By equipping buses with seatbelts, stronger roofs, and safer windows, we can prevent deaths and minimize injuries. With bus ridership increasing, it’s more important than ever to pass this legislation. We need to ensure bus trips don’t turn into tragedies.”

“To prevent more deadly motorcoach accidents from occurring and to help reduce the number of deaths and injuries when crashes do happen, I have joined with Sen. Sherrod Brown to author a sweeping bus safety bill,” said Hutchison. “We urge Congress to pass this legislation swiftly and help save more families the grief and sadness of losing a loved one in a preventable tragedy.”

“As airline, train travel, and car rental become more expensive, people are returning to motorcoaches as an efficient, cost-effective form of transportation,” said Lewis. “Buses are carrying our children to school, and they are carrying parents and grandparents on vacation trips all over the country. Buses need to be safe. These measures are long overdue. I am glad that Sens. Brown and Hutchinson have joined in this effort to resolve safety issues in motorcoach transportation.”

"Motorcoaches are the over-the-road regional airlines for millions of American families, yet they are not protected by the same high level of safety that has been a hallmark of air travel," said Jacqueline S. Gillan, Vice President of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety. "People are needlessly dying and suffering serious injuries because of persistent delay by the federal government to make motorcoach safety a priority. This federal legislation is needed to ensure that available, affordable and effective safety technologies to protect passengers and reduce crashes will become standard equipment on all motorcoaches."

Brown, Hutchison, and Lewis first introduced motorcoach safety legislation in 2007. From 2005-2007, there were more than 100 bus crashes involving fatalities.

According to the American Bus Association, there were over 750 million passenger trips by motorcoach in 2007 covering more than 60 billion miles. Despite an increase in ridership and a lengthy list of motorcoach safety improvements suggested by the National Transportation Safety Board, the U.S. Department of Transportation has not implemented many basic passenger safety protections. This includes safety belts, crush-resistant roofs, and stronger windows.

The Motorcoach Enhanced Safety Act of 2009, which has been introduced in the Senate by Brown and Hutchison and in the House by Lewis, would require DOT to make much-needed upgrades to federal safety standards for motorcoaches, increase driver operating standards and training requirements, and implement important safety-enhancing technologies.

Specifically, the bipartisan legislation would require:

- Safety belts and stronger seating systems to ensure occupants stay in their seats in a crash.
- Anti-ejection glazing on windows to prevent passengers from being easily thrown outside the motorcoach.
- Strong, crush-resistant roofs that can withstand rollovers.
- Improved protection against fires by reducing flammability of the motorcoach interior, and better training for operators in the case of fire.
- Improved motorcoach driver training. Currently, no training is required by federal regulation.
- Electronic On-Board Recorders (EOBRs) with real-time capabilities to track precise vehicle location, and recorded data not accessible to manipulation by a driver or motorcoach operator.
- Standards for the safety performance of remanufactured commercial motor vehicle tires.
- The installation of direct tire pressure monitoring systems to ensure that tires are properly inflated.

Brown and Hutchison's legislation is an expansion of legislation they introduced in 2007. *The Motorcoach Enhanced Safety Act of 2009* includes provisions from the 2007 legislation while adding safety provisions related to tire performance. The Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety, and Security held an oversight hearing on motorcoach safety and discussed the Brown-Hutchison legislation in September 2008.

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