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Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety names new Board of Directors co-chairs: Bill Martin, Senior Vice President of Farmers Insurance, and Joan Claybrook, President Emeritus of Public Citizen.

WASHINGTON, DC (December 8, 2009) – Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) today announced that Bill Martin, a Senior Vice President of Farmers Insurance, and Joan Claybrook, President Emeritus of Public Citizen, were elected co-chairs of its Board of Directors. The election took place at their board meeting in Washington, D.C. on December 3, 2009.

Mr. Martin and Ms. Claybrook will serve as insurance co-chair and consumer co-chair respectively through 2010.

Advocates was formed in 1989 by leading insurance and consumer, safety and medical organizations, to coalesce in support of adopting effective laws and regulations in the U.S. Congress, Executive branch agencies and state legislatures. The Board of Directors is comprised of a balance of insurers and consumer groups, with funding provided by insurance companies. Each member of the Board has an equal vote in the adoption and implementation of an annual program addressing such policy issues as teen driving, distracted driving, impaired driving, seat belt use, motor carrier safety, and motor vehicle safety standards.

“Advocates is continually uncovering legislative areas where consumer safety advocates and private sector insurer interests agree,” insurance co-chair Martin said. “It is great to have a vehicle to communicate mutual support and push government action to support the consensus.”

Consumer representation on the Advocates board includes the American College of Emergency Physicians, American Public Health Association, Center for Auto Safety, Consumer Federation of America, Emergency Nurses Association, Kids And Cars, Trauma Foundation, and Whirlwind Wheelchair International. Additional consumer representatives are Joan Claybrook, who was Advocates' first consumer co-chair in 1989, and R. David Pittle, past senior vice president for technical policy at Consumers Union, publishers of Consumer Reports.

“Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety is an extraordinary alliance of consumer advocates and insurance leaders that has helped to transform our nation’s traffic safety laws and vehicle safety regulations over the past 20 years,” said consumer co-chair Joan Claybrook. “It was a great honor to launch Advocates as its first consumer co-chair in 1989, and to now return to this leadership role to help steer this great organization into its third decade of saving lives on our highways.”

Insurance industry representatives on the board are Allstate Insurance Company, California State Automobile Association, Farmers Insurance Group, Independent Insurance Agents and Brokers of America, Liberty Mutual Group, National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies, National Association of Professional Insurance Agents, Nationwide Insurance, State Farm Insurance Companies, Unitrin Specialty, and USAA.

"The property and casualty insurance industry has in Advocates a unique safety lobby whose countless legislative and regulatory victories have prevented enormous economic losses and an untold number of tragedies," said insurance co-chair Bill Martin, who leads Farmer Insurance's Personal Insurance Business Unit. "The more the insurance industry is at the same table with the nation's leading consumer and safety groups, the more our policyholders will benefit from this strong working relationship."

A new addition to Advocates' Board of Directors is Brian Conklin, Vice President for Federal Government Relations at USAA, who formerly served on the senior staff of President George W. Bush, including two years as Deputy Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs.

Among the many state and national highway safety initiatives being spearheaded by Advocates are three federal proposals:

- The Safe Teen And Novice Driver Uniform Protection (STANDUP) Act (H.R. 1895) to ensure that every teen in every state is protected by an effective and comprehensive Graduated Drivers Licensing law (www.saferoads4teens.org),
- The Motor Carrier Enhanced Safety Act (S.554) to correct deadly vehicle safety design flaws in motor coach buses.
- A petition instructing the U.S. Department of Transportation to initiate a rulemaking to curb distracted driving by operators of commercial motor vehicles, such as tractor trailers, motor coach buses, and large vans.

Additionally, Advocates plans to release its "2010 Roadmap to State Highway Safety Laws" on January 11, 2010, to highlight state-by-state gaps in essential traffic safety laws.

For more information about Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, please visit www.saferoads.org.

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