

**NEWS from Congressman John W. Olver (MA-1)
Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing
and Urban Development**

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**Opening Remarks by Chairman John W. Olver
Highway Safety – NHTSA’s FY2011 Budget Request Hearing
March 25, 2010**

At its core, NHTSA is tasked with improving the safety of passenger travel on our highway system and has played a significant role in the steady reduction in fatalities per vehicle mile traveled. It is estimated that fatalities in 2009 dropped to under 34,000, the lowest on record since 1954. However, as the economy recovers and people begin to travel again, NHTSA will need to remain focused on continued safety improvements across our transportation network.

The 2011 budget proposal before us today requests a total of \$877 million for the programs within NHTSA. In particular I am interested in discussing the \$50 million proposal for a new Distracted Driver Initiative. The explosion of wireless devices and in vehicle entertainment systems present significant safety concerns offering multiple opportunities to distract drivers’ attention from the road. I am

interested to hear how this initiative will use lessons learned from past campaigns to change driver behavior.

In addition, I look forward to discussing the agency's request for 33 additional FTEs. The recent investigations into Toyota and NHTSA's response to safety complaints have raised questions about the agency's technical capacity to critically assess the advanced electronic components within modern vehicles. In light of these investigations, I am interested in better understanding how the requested FTEs are proposed to be allocated and how many are slated to expand vehicle safety oversight activities.

Mr. Administrator, by its nature, NHTSA has the unfortunate burden of making news only when mistakes are made and tragedy occurs. Moving forward this Subcommittee is committed to working with you to strengthen the agency's oversight capabilities and ensure that every effort is made to achieve optimal safety on our highways and roads.