

UNITED STATES SENATOR • OHIO

**Mike DeWine**



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## **DEWINE MEASURES INCLUDED IN HIGHWAY BILL MAKE ROADS SAFER FOR FAMILIES**

*Children, Consumers Would Benefit From Safer Vehicles and Roads, More Product Safety Information*

U.S. Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH) today announced the Highway Bill conference report contains six provisions, designed to save lives by providing consumers with better safety information, by requiring vehicle testing to consider the safety needs of children, and by making our roads safer by directing resources toward our most dangerous roads and intersections. He introduced these measures as part of package of transportation safety legislation in February.

### **Stars on Cars**

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) regularly conducts tests measuring the safety performance of vehicles in frontal and side impact crashes, as well as rollover resistance, and assigns star ratings based on those tests. The star ratings, although available on the NHTSA website, are not easily accessible to car shoppers when they need the information most—on the dealership car lot. Senator DeWine’s point of sale labeling legislation, the “Stars on Cars Act,” takes the common sense step of adding star ratings to the other information on car pricing stickers already required by law, such as cost, fuel economy, and vehicle features. Senator Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) aided in passage of this provision as a co-sponsor. The regulation will now take effect no later than September 1, 2007 (for the '08 model year).

“This common sense measure puts important government-mandated safety information right on the window stickers on cars at dealership lots, right when decisions purchasing decisions are made,” said Senator DeWine. “Consumers will vote with their dollars for safer vehicles when they have ready access to crash test data. I was pleased to see an automaker voluntarily enact the Stars on Cars initiative, and am very happy to see this legislation take the next step to becoming law.”

### **Safe Kids and Cars**

While NHTSA currently devotes tremendous resources to improving and understanding vehicle safety, several emerging dangers to small children including backover and other “non-traffic, non-crash” situations are not yet fully integrated into the agency’s programs. Currently, NHTSA does not regularly collect statistics measuring the number of deaths and injuries that result from non-traffic, non-crash incidents. Senator DeWine’s Safe Kids and Cars provision, co-sponsored by Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), directs NHTSA to evaluate technologies designed to prevent these child deaths and injuries, codifies in law a power window safety initiative announced last year by Senator DeWine and NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeffrey Runge, and for the first time to integrate data on “non-crash, non-traffic” deaths and injuries into its data collection efforts and databases. Such accidents disproportionately affect infants and small children, and occur when vehicles are parked or are operated in driveways, including backover, hyperthermia, and power window entrapment. By reviewing preventative technologies with respect to effectiveness, NHTSA can help parents make intelligent decisions when purchasing aftermarket add-ons such as rear cameras or sensors.

“Children are not just miniature adults, they have unique safety needs. Their spines work differently, seatbelts fit them differently, and they interact with buttons and door handles differently,” stated Senator DeWine. “By directing NHTSA to track non-traffic, non-crash injuries and deaths, and to evaluate the effectiveness of aftermarket technologies designed to prevent them, the agency can reduce number of children who die in these types of accidents each year. These measures work to make sure children are just as safe in cars as adults.”

### **Drivers Education & Licensing**

Senator DeWine’s Driver Education and Licensing Improvement provision, co-sponsored by Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), would create a research program within the Department of Transportation that will focus specifically on driver education and licensing improvements. The research program is focused on forming a best practices blueprint to guide states and provide them with resources necessary to transform driver education programs from their currently ineffective form into courses that have a real, data-driven safety impact for novice drivers. Areas of emphasis will include development and delivery of driver education curricula, instructor certification, and instructor training. The program will also conduct research and assist States with harmonization of new driver education programs with proven graduated driver licensing (GDL) laws.

“Learning to drive responsibly must begin at the very beginning of the licensing process. That process begins with proper education, giving teenagers the tools they need to not just drive a car, but to operate the vehicle safely. Since we all share the same roads, it’s important to assist states with improving their education and licensing programs to ensure that young Americans have the quality training they need to stay safe while learning to drive.”

### **Safe Intersections**

The bill prohibits unauthorized sale and use of an electronic device that gives the driver of a vehicle the ability to change a traffic light from red to green at the touch of a button. The Safe Intersections provision penalize those who sell MIRTs (mobile infrared transmitters) to unauthorized users with a fine of up to \$10,000, imprisonment for up to one year, or both. Those found using MIRT without authorization for use will be fined up to \$10,000, imprisoned up to six months, or both. MIRTs are used by police, fire, and rescue vehicles, but are now becoming available to the general public through a number of Internet sites like eBay. Representative Mike Rogers (R-MI) sponsored similar legislation attached to House version of the bill.

“Mobile infrared transmitters were designed to save lives by allowing our first responders to get to emergency sites quickly. But with increased unauthorized sale and possession of this technology, roads are becoming unsafe for drivers. We must penalize those who sell and possess these transmitters to curb their use.”

### **Safe Streets and Highways**

Senator DeWine’s Safe Streets and Highways provision, co-sponsored by Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-WV), will ensure that states receiving federal transportation safety funding take steps to systematically identify, rank according to severity, and disclose to the driving public a list of their most dangerous roads and intersections.

This data is currently available in some states like Ohio, but is not generally available to the public in the rest of the country. Additionally, the DeWine legislation would provide resources and requirements for state transportation officials to collaborate with law enforcement, engineers, local officials, and safety groups to come up with innovative solutions to dangerous intersections and long stretches of roadway.

“According to the Ohio Department of Public Safety, there were 1, 285 fatalities on Ohio’s roads last

year. Residents must have the right to know where dangerous roads and intersections are in their communities, and where these tragic deaths are occurring. That way, they can not only make sure improvements are being made, but so they can make responsible decisions when driving their families or handing their keys to young drivers.”

### **Traffic Safety Law Enforcement Campaigns**

The provision, cosponsored by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), would require states to conduct a combined media/law enforcement campaign aimed at reducing drunk driving fatalities. The bill provides \$29 million dollars each year for implementation of the DeWine-Lautenberg program. Specifically, the law enforcement portion consists of sobriety checkpoints in the District of Columbia and in the 39 States that allow them and saturation patrols in those states that do not. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that the sobriety checkpoints proposed in the underlying bill may reduce alcohol-related crashes by as much as 20 percent. Law enforcement officials from across the United States underscored this point in a recent conference sponsored by MADD, making high visibility enforcement campaigns a top priority. More than 75 percent of the public has indicated in NHTSA polls their support for sobriety checkpoints. In fact, NHTSA has concluded that 62 percent of Americans want sobriety checkpoints to be used more often.

“Alcohol-related traffic fatalities have increased in three of the past four years,” said Senator DeWine. “In 2003 – the last year for which final statistics are available – 17,013 Americans died in alcohol-related incidents, and sadly many of those killed in these types of accidents are innocent victims. This measure helps to reduce the number of drunk drivers on the roads.”

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