

Dear Highway Bill Conferee:

At the conclusion of a normal year we have become accustomed to learning that over 40,000 members of our citizenry have been killed in automobile crashes across this great land. Perhaps like me, you have sacrificed a loved one to that statistic.

Unlike me, you have an opportunity to initiate some positive changes to the way state and local highway authorities address specific shortcomings which currently exist in some state's highway safety programs. In addition, you can help guide the implementation of laws which focus more attention and resources on prevention and less on protecting the guilty.

There are currently many groups and organizations working to get your attention away from "change" and are pressing you to maintain the status quo. Their claim is that state and local highway authorities have different agendas and should be free to pursue those agendas in their own way and time. They also contend that states should not be forced to comply with federal mandates.

I would like to offer a different point of view. While it is true that different states may have different issues to contend with on a long term basis, the immediate and continuous concern for all states should be highway safety. For example, Highway authorities in Alaska have to be concerned with glacial movement at some highway locations while the State of Florida has a problem with sink-holes from time to time. Both States however, have a problem with alcohol related accidents and high accident locations which remain a threat to motorists year after year, unabated.

Without guidance and leadership at the national level, some states will continue to flounder in their own ineffectiveness. For example, I attempted to obtain a list of dangerous highway locations from each state in order to alert motorists to their locations. Some states complied with my request freely while others refused to release that information, preferring instead to keep the public ignorant. Still others stated that they didn't maintain such records. Under that situation one could ask how anything can get fixed if it can't first be recognized as broken.

Since the beginning of our existence as a free nation, those elected to political office have been charged with protecting "We the people..." Somewhere between then and now, some political organizations and lobbying groups have lost sight of this obligation and have chosen instead to solicit your vote for protection of their own self-interests and bottom line. To these organizations, the status quo is "Okay." I request that you strongly oppose that point of view and adopt the Senate version of the current highway appropriations bill as it pertains to highway safety issues; specifically, Sections 1401, 1402, 1403 and 1409.

The highway bill, H.R. 3 offers you a unique opportunity to save lives, and I urge you to consider every option you have at your disposal to realize that opportunity.

Without your leadership, we are destined to repeat history year after year...40,000 plus lives at a time.

Respectfully,

Dean T. Johnson
President
The Sandy Johnson Foundation:
Making Our Roads Safer