



Parents Against Tired Truckers and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

STATEMENT BY KATHLEEN ELLSBURY, MD
WIFE OF ANTHONY QAMAR – KILLED IN A TRUCK CRASH
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
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Good morning. My name is Dr. Kathleen Ellsbury, and I am from Seattle, Washington. I never expected to come to Washington, DC, under these circumstances. I am here – at the close of the Truck Safety Coalition’s “Sorrow to Strength” conference on behalf of my late husband Dr. Tony Qamar and his friend and fellow seismologist Dan Johnson.

Tony was passionate about his profession as an earthquake researcher and noted spokesman on the topic. He was widely recognized as among the very best. He’d climb up mountaintops and climb down into craters of volcanoes without hesitation.

On October 5th, 2005, Tony and his friend Dan’s lives came to a sudden and violent end as they were innocently driving along Highway 101 near the Washington State coast to retrieve some seismic instruments.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, they were crushed to death when the car they were riding in was struck by logs that fell of an overweight trailer truck.

The crash investigators concluded that the logging truck was speeding around a curve, was overloaded by almost 4 tons, had faulty brakes, and the screws on the metal brackets that were supposed to hold the logs were dangerously worn down.

We also learned that the trucking company had a history of many safety violations.

Months later, the driver was charged with two counts of vehicular homicide, but he was still allow to continue driving big rigs.

One year after Tony and Dan were killed -- what should have happened immediately and automatically finally happened—the driver was removed from the road. That was only because he lost another load of logs on another rural road, but this time, no one was hurt.

Ultimately, there was a plea bargain 15 months after the crash, and the driver is now serving a 4 ½ year sentence for vehicular homicide, based on reckless disregard for others' safety. As best I can tell, from reading the statutes, the driver will be able to drive large trucks again. And, the trucking company is still in business.

My loss of my husband, so suddenly and senselessly, has left a giant hole in my heart and my life. But, I know I am not alone because what happened to Tony and Dan on Highway 101 wasn't an isolated incident. We know that year-in and year-out nearly 5,000 Americans are killed in crashes involving big trucks and many more are seriously injured.

It became obvious to me that something had to be done to tighten the laws in my state, and I thank Washington State Representative Ruth Kagi for her leadership in getting something done. She was personally moved by our tragic loss, and she's been relentless in getting needed changes in our state's truck safety laws.

I made my trek from Washington state to Washington, DC, on behalf of a great man and humanitarian – Tony Qamar. I am here to urge our Congress and President to freeze truck size and weight limits and to pass laws with real teeth to prevent and punish truck safety violations. – and to do it now.

I am asking every American to get involved now by signing our StopBiggerTrucks.org online petition to stop the trucking lobbyists from getting their way at the expense of lives on our highways. Enough is enough.

If you think it can't happen to you, I understand. I never thought in my wildest dreams that it could happen to me. But, I am here to say that your worst nightmare can come true, and that is why it is critically important that everyone this year – this minute -- take a stand against bigger and heavier trucks on our highways. Please go to StopBiggerTruck.org and sign up for more safety and civility on our roadways.

Thank you.