



Parents Against Tired Truckers and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

STATEMENT OF MARCHELLE AND FRANK WOOD
MOTHER OF DANA WOOD – KILLED IN A TRUCK CRASH
FALLS CHURCH, VIRGINIA
MAY 4, 2009

My name is Frank/Marchelle Wood. My husband/wife Frank/Marchelle and I did not have far to travel here this morning from our Falls Church, Virginia, home. But, we have traveled a very long and painful distance since October 15, 2002 -- the day our lives were forever changed.

It was on that day that our daughter Dana and a girl friend were killed on Interstate-95 returning to East Carolina University, after spending the fall break of her freshman year with us at home.

The truck driver could have either stopped or changed lanes. Instead, he didn't brake and struck Dana's car pushing it 1,500 feet down the highway. He had already clocked 9 hours behind the wheel that day. And, by the way, he was driving on a suspended license!

We are not alone because every week nearly 100 people are routinely killed in big truck crashes, leaving about 5,000 families to grieve their immeasurable loss every year.

We came here to say that we as a nation can and must do better. We know the public sympathizes. That is why the Truck Safety Coalition is launching this new StopBiggerTrucks.org call to action to mobilize citizens to tell our still-new Congress and our still-new President to make our roads safer, save lives, and keep our families whole.

Our policymakers can do so by freezing truck size and weight limits right where they are. They can do so by keeping substandard unsafe Mexican trucks off our highways. And they can do so by getting tired truckers and chronic violators out of the driver's seat.

This year, lobbyists for the trucking and shipping industries are roaming the halls of Congress seeking a dramatic increase in the weight and size of trucks allowed on our highways as part of the reauthorization of the multi-year, multi-billion dollar federal surface transportation legislation.

With each additional ton over the current 80,000-pound limit, the chances of a truck crash resulting in a serious injury or death significantly increases. Heavier trucks are more likely to roll over in a crash and a 100,000-pound truck takes 25 percent longer to stop than an 80,000-pound truck. Truck braking distance is especially important because when a big truck and car collide, 98 percent of the people who die are occupants of the passenger vehicle.

Heavy trucks damage our roads and bridges at increased rates even when slightly overloaded. With more than 1 in 4 of our nation's bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, and one-third of our major roads in poor or mediocre condition, we simply can't afford heavier trucks.

If the big truck companies have their way, more families will have to suffer what ours did and always will. There will be more truck crash-related deaths, more debilitating injuries, and more roadway damage and destruction.

In Dana's loving memory, we are fighting for the lives of others for whom it's not too late. It's time for our policymakers to consider public safety and the preservation of our transportation infrastructure before the profits of the trucking industry.

We ask the American public to join in this effort to by signing our petition at www.StopBiggerTrucks.org.

Thank you.