



Parents Against Tired Truckers and Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

**STATEMENT OF JANE MATHIS
MOTHER OF DAVID MACAULAY MATHIS –
KILLED IN A TRUCK CRASH
ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA
April 1, 2009**

Good morning. My name is Jane Mathis, and I am from St. Augustine, Florida. My life was changed forever on March 25, 2004. It should have been one of the happiest times of my life but instead turned into my biggest nightmare. My 23-year-old son David and his sweetheart, Mary Kathryn, were married five days earlier and were innocently driving home from their honeymoon. Their car was stopped when a large truck plowed into them from behind, suddenly and violently killing them. My living room was filled with wedding flowers and funeral flowers at the same time.

I am here in Washington, D.C. today to demand that our federal government take action to stop the 5,000 deaths and more than 100,000 injuries caused by truck crashes every year. Not enough progress is being made to reduce deaths and injuries caused by these truck crashes. We have become complacent with the fact that every week approximately 100 people die in truck crashes and 2,000 more are injured. Enough is enough.

Right now, as we speak here, trucking and shipping executives, who have been flown in by their industry lobbying groups, are meeting with members of Congress and trying to persuade them to increase truck weights from 80,000 pounds to 97,000 pounds. I find this action irresponsible and irrational. Any such increase would result in even more danger to motorists and truck drivers, more damage to our ailing infrastructure, and more destruction to our environment.

The chances of a truck crash resulting in death and serious injuries increase with each extra ton over 80,000 pounds. Heavier trucks are also more likely to roll over in a crash and take longer to brake. In fact, a 100,000-pound truck takes 25 percent longer to stop

than an 80,000-pound truck. Braking distance is especially important because in a crash between a big truck and a car, 98% of the people who die are in the smaller passenger vehicle.

Heavy trucks also damage our roads and bridges at increased rates even when slightly overloaded. This is especially terrifying considering that more than 1 in 4 of our nation's bridges are either structurally deficient or functionally obsolete, and one-third of our major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. We must learn from the Minneapolis bridge collapse and take steps to prevent another tragedy like that from happening. Load was one of the contributing factors to the collapse. Increasing the loads that trucks will be allowed to transport is nothing less than horrifying. Just one legal 80,000-pound tractor-trailer does as much damage to road pavement as 9,600 cars.

Everyday I live with the fact that a big truck crashed into my child's car and killed him and his new wife. David and Mary Kathryn had just embarked upon a new life together and it was taken from them. We don't need bigger trucks, we need safer trucks. If large trucking companies and their lobbyists have their way, American families will be the ones to pay. And, clearly they understand this danger. A public opinion poll by Lake Research Partners, a well-respected and well-known polling firm, found that a large majority of the American public opposes relaxing truck safety standards and allowing bigger and heavier trucks on our roads and highways. Sixty six percent of Americans oppose Congress changing the current law to allow increased truck weights and 82% feel that double and triple trailer trucks are less safe and more dangerous than trucks pulling a single trailer. I applaud the efforts of Senator Lautenberg, Representative McGovern, Representative Kirk, truck drivers, environmental groups and other health and safety groups who support legislation to retain current truck size and weight limits. I urge the rest of Congress to follow their lead. I urge everyone to go to our new website, www.StopBiggerTrucks.org and sign our on-line petition opposing bigger and heavier trucks. Do the right thing -- Stand up against special interest lobbying and protect American families traveling on our roads.

Thank you.