

Statement of David Strickland
Administrator-Designate, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
December 15, 2009

Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, and Members of the Committee, I am honored to be before you today in this capacity. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the President for making me his nominee to head NHTSA, and I would also like to thank Secretary LaHood for his support of my selection.

No man stands alone, and the primary reason I am here today is because of the love and assistance from a lot of people. First and foremost, I have a loving family that is either here today or watching on the Internet. I love you all, and there are four women in particular that I would like to acknowledge.

My wife, Robin, is the center of my universe and has experienced every emotion and facet that has come with my Senate service. Her love sustains me every single day. Her strength and wise counsel truly has made me a better staffer, and more importantly, a better man.

My mother, Vada Stevenson, is my biggest cheerleader and my guardian angel. Even though she had to be in Georgia today, I am uplifted knowing that her love and strength are always with me.

The love and devotion of my stepmother, Janie Strickland, and my sister, Loren, are boundless and unconditional. You two are truly a dynamic duo, and you both mean the world to me.

Along with these four ladies, one man deserves special recognition, my Pop. Lorenzo Strickland is a father in every true sense of the word. His demands for excellence, along with his lessons about the value of hard work and being a man of honor, resonate with me everyday. Pop, thank you for guidance, your patience and your love.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has a demanding and crucial mission. Reducing traffic-related fatalities is a task that never stops, and successes are not moments of repose. While there have been marked decreases in traffic fatalities from last year, this country still lost approximately 37,000 lives due to traffic accidents. That's 37,000 funerals, 37,000 lost loved ones. The reason I have always been so proud of this agency and its people is that they recognize the human toll and work tirelessly each and everyday to decrease that number. They are the finest experts in the country. If confirmed, it would be my honor to stand with the NHTSA staff and the State highway safety agencies and aid them in their missions.

The second essential mission for which the agency is tasked is the implementation of the CAFE standards in coordination with EPA's greenhouse gas standards. I understand the importance of timely and proper implementation. Decreasing our dependence on foreign oil and reducing the carbon footprint from the passenger fleet is a mission that if confirmed, I will take as seriously as every other mission at NHTSA. I look forward to working with the staff, the EPA, and the manufacturers to make sure that standards are scientifically sound and achieve the benchmarks set forth by the President and the Congress.

I would be remiss if I did not thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your trust in me to lead your Consumer Protection Subcommittee, and your support of my nomination. It is an honor to serve you and the people of West Virginia.

Additionally, I want to thank my three current and former subcommittee chairs, Senators Dorgan, Pryor and Klobuchar. You and your staff were gracious and thoughtful, and working for all of you have been hallmarks of my tenure in the Senate.

I would also like to thank my Committee colleagues. They are the finest staffers on Capitol Hill and I am enriched by their professionalism, intelligence and support. Team Commerce, I will always cherish your friendship.

Finally, I would like to thank the two prior Chairmen that I served during my tenure. Senator Hollings hired me back in 2001. I was as green a counsel as you could imagine, and I made my fair share of mistakes. Despite that, Senator Hollings stood by me at every turn and trusted me without hesitation. I hope I have validated his faith in me over the years. I miss him and Ms. Peatsy greatly.

Senator Inouye taught me more life lessons in four years than I thought I could learn in a lifetime. The times that Senator shared with me in his office talking about policy or life are some of the most cherished memories I have. Learning to disagree without being disagreeable has been a cornerstone of my success as a staffer, and that lesson was from him. Senator Inouye, thank you for letting me be a part of your ohana.

Members of the Committee, thank you for your time and consideration of my nomination, I am happy to answer any questions.