



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



NEWS

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STATEMENT BY SECRETARY JOHN A. VOLPE AT PRESS CONFERENCE WITH DOUGLAS TOMS, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 1969

One of the most disturbing and distressing problems facing me as Secretary of Transportation is the fact that we are killing 55-thousand people on our streets and highways every year. We are determined to stop this slaughter.

Yesterday, President Nixon announced his nomination of Douglas Toms of Olympia, Washington, to be Director of one of our Department's most important constituent agencies, the National Highway Safety Bureau.

We are extremely fortunate to have obtained Mr. Toms services. He is eminently qualified and is a widely-recognized expert in the field of highway safety.

We have spent considerable time in filling this most-important post, but we took the time because the responsibilities and challenges are such that a truly top caliber official had to be found. We needed a leader who was not only capable and skilled, but also dedicated and concerned. Doug Toms is just such a person.

He has served as my special consultant for highway safety since September. He has thoroughly reviewed the present organization and programs of the Highway Safety Bureau and has filed a report with me containing a number of recommendations. He did his job well, and we are giving all his recommendations thoughtful consideration.

One of the recommendations that I have acted upon concerns the status and position of the Bureau.

The enabling act that created the Highway Safety Bureau allowed for it to be placed under the immediate direction of the Secretary of Transportation. By administrative action, however, it was subsequently placed under the Federal Highway Administration. We are, today, reversing that action and placing the Bureau directly under the Office of the Secretary.

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Such action has been recommended on two previous occasions -- by the following statutory groups - this past summer.

The National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council and
The National Highway Safety Advisory Committee.

We feel that this will allow us to give safety the attention and emphasis it demands and deserves.

All of the N-H-S-B functions relating directly to motor vehicles and their drivers will come under the Office of the Secretary. Several other functions, such as safety design engineering in the construction of new highways, will remain in the Federal Highway Administration.

The actions we are taking now -- the appointment of Doug Toms and the initial realignment of highway safety responsibilities -- are first steps. We now have our man, and we now have our organization in the right place. We will follow these first steps with a fulfillment of our responsibilities as we work strenuously to assure that our highways and vehicles are safer, and that the terrible toll of over 150 Americans killed in crashes every day will be cut sharply.

Safety -- in all aspects and all modes -- has top priority in this Department. We look forward to significant accomplishments.

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