

TALKING POINTS FOR
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
TO THE OREGON STATE LEGISLATORS
SALEM, OREGON
MARCH 15, 1985

Draft Prepared by Drucella Andersen

March 11, 1985 at 10:30 a.m.

* I would like to thank Roberta Atiyeh (pronounced a-tee-a; the Governor's wife) and the distinguished members of the Oregon Legislature for welcoming me here today.

* An important bill is before your State House that could affect the lives of all citizens in this state.

* The bill calls for mandatory use of safety belts and would save many precious lives in Oregon. And because safety belts are already standard equipment in virtually every car on the road, we could start saving lives and reducing injuries right away, without a cent to the cost of a car.

* The bill under consideration is strong, effective legislation. Oregon already has a statewide safety belt use rate of 23 percent, which is substantially above the national use rate of 15 percent. With this new law, I am convinced safety belt use would increase dramatically.

* Governor Victor Atiyeh is a strong supporter of highway safety and I would like to publicly thank him for his tireless efforts on behalf of the safety of all Oregonians.

* We know Oregon's commitment to safety is second to none.

* For example, in 1983, highway accidents in Oregon involving alcohol or drugs accounted for 274 deaths and 2,283 injuries. You took action against this senseless tragedy and new, more stringent drunk driving laws went into effect on July 1, 1984.

* You also took steps to protect children riding in cars when the second phase of a tougher child safety seat law became effective last July.

* Since the new law went into effect, the number of children in Oregon injured or killed in motor vehicle accidents has decreased by 36 percent. Because of your action, many children are alive today.

* I encourage you to join the growing momentum as an increasing number of states consider and pass mandatory safety belt use laws. Last week Missouri became the fifth state to enact a safety belt use law, joining New York, New Jersey, Illinois and Michigan in passing this important legislation.

* Governor Atiyeh tells me he has a pen ready to sign a similar law in Oregon, if you send one to him.

* I know your decision requires thoughtfulness, understanding and prudence.

* Your decision may not be easy, for this is not a simple issue. I know that strong feelings exist on both sides.

* Yet I know that in state legislatures where safety belt laws have been debated, the most vocal supporters are crash victims and their families who know the lifesaving benefits of safety belts.

* To those who say a belt law will be ineffective I may look at New York. With its new belt use law, which went into effect on January 1, New York has experienced a dramatic increase in belt use -- from 16 to 70 percent. During the first month of the law, New York estimates that deaths declined by 38 percent from 1984 levels.

* A few weeks ago, I met with Prime Minister Magaret Thatcher during her visit to Washington. She told me that in Great Britain, safety belt use increased from 40 percent to 90 percent and fatalities declined 25 percent after passage of a safety belt law.

* President Reagan told the American people in a weekly radio address a short while ago, "If we insist long enough and loudly enough, we can save lives."

* Please add your voice to ours. Safety belts do save lives.

* For the sake of ourselves, our families and our fellow citizens, the time has come for America to "buckle up."

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