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REMARKS BY
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
TO THE ALCOHOL AND DRUG RULE CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
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As I look around the audience this morning, I see a number of people with whom I've had the pleasure of working with on issues in the railroad field. I welcome you and look forward to working with you in the months to come on issues that are of importance to the industry.

This is the fourth of five seminars around the country with regard to implementation of the alcohol and drug rule. And we really have come full circle at this point. The issue came up many years ago. In fact, it was the National Transportation Safety Board that in 1974 raised the issue of an alcohol and drug rule. And there have been many years of debate on this -- 12 years all together since the discussions really began. Now we're at the point of implementation. Soon after I came on board as Secretary of Transportation, we began to move forward to get this rule in place. We felt that consultation was extremely important and, as John Riley said, there were many hearings around the country where your input was extremely valuable -- invaluable, I might say. And we're looking forward to consulting with you in the implementation of this rule.

Let me put this rule into perspective in terms of transportation issues and my priorities. When I came to the Department in February of 1983, one of the first things I did was to sit down and talk with former Secretaries of Transportation and others in the transportation community who care deeply about the issues and who could help me to focus on where there might be additional needs. These meetings were a sounding board for me to explain those areas that I thought were most important and to set our top priorities and really proceed with all speed to achieve those goals and priorities. The way I looked at it was that you have a limited time to serve the public in a position such as mine, and I wanted to really make it count in terms of making a difference -- a positive difference -- for people. Now, what could be more important than safety issues? I think that that has to be the highest priority for a Secretary of Transportation across all modes, if indeed you want to be able to impact people's lives in a positive way.

What we did was to look first of all at highways, because 92 percent of our fatalities occur on America's highways. And we began a three-pronged approach. Before I got to the Department, an important piece of legislation had already been passed -- the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982. That milestone legislation, the nickle-a-gallon increase in our gasoline tax, provided for a doubling on average of funds to the states for repairing rehabilitation of our infrastructure, which was long, long overdue. Obviously, that's very important in terms of the safety of our highways and our bridges in this country.

The second part of that three-pronged initiative was the design of the vehicle. Any of you who might have purchased new cars in this new model year will find there's a little high-mounted stop light at the base of the rear window. That light, we found through five years of studies with police fleets and taxi fleets up in New York -- that one little device, which is not costly at all, will prevent approximately 900,000 accidents. It will also prevent about 40,000 injuries and eliminate more than \$400 million in property damage each year. It is cost effective regulation, in my view.

The third prong on highway safety involved the behavior of the driver. And this is where we're working very hard to encourage people to use seat belts. We're also involved in a massive effort to get every last drunk driver off the roads and the highways of this country. And in that respect, we have sponsored and worked very hard to urge the states to increase their drinking age to 21. Now 37 states do have that law. By next September, for any state that does not have it, we will withhold five percent of their highway funds and ten percent the following year until they pass such a law. So, in that area, the issue of alcohol is certainly one that we feel is very crucial to try to raise the consciousness level of the American people to show we are no longer willing to permit lax laws and lenient judges.

Boating safety is another one. We are working very hard through the Coast Guard because there are problems on our waterways with the use of alcohol and boating.

Our commitment to safety across all modes of transportation extends, of course, to air safety. What could be more crucial than making certain that our airways are as safe as they can possibly be? We do have the safest system in the world, but we can make it ever safer. We've tightened up on our rules with regard to the use of alcohol and drugs among our work force and pilots. And we've done a number of other things: bringing on more inspectors, more air traffic controllers, and implemented a number of initiatives that are designed to ensure security around the world with regard to our aircraft and where they fly.

These are just a few of the many things that are going on across all modes of transportation. And I say this just by way of putting into context the very, very important mission that we're about today and tomorrow. The work that we are implementing will be a milestone regulation in the railroad industry. I can't tell you how important I feel this is, and it was one of my top priorities. I knew, without a moment's hesitation, that we should move forward on this rule because this was the only area -- the only major domestic mode of transportation -- that had no federal alcohol and drug regulation. And ladies and gentlemen, we're talking about saving lives.

We're talking about making a positive difference for people, especially when you stop and think about the suffering that goes on across this country related to the use of alcohol and drugs.

I want to thank you for working with us as we move forward to put this rule into place. And I know that not everyone in the audience was for the rule. I understand that. But we've worked through it together. And I think what we've done is fair, it's just, and I think we can be proud of the fact that we now have a rule in place to address a problem.

Livingston, Louisiana, is an example: where 3,000 people had to be evacuated over a two-day period because of a derailment. Alcohol was involved in that accident. We're just fortunate that no one was killed in that particular accident. When we look at the statistics, we see that there have been 48 accidents related to alcohol in some way, resulting in 37 deaths and \$30 million in damage.

So, we do have a problem to address. And I just want you to know how much I care about this and how dedicated I am to trying to implement it in a fair way with your input and your assistance and your help. Because, you look at your situation, and how often is it that any of us have the kind of opportunity that we have before us now to make that positive difference for people. This is that kind of issue. And, again, I thank you for your willingness to be here, to spend the time with us, to ensure that we implement it in the best possible way. And I look forward to working with you, not only in this initiative, but in many more over the months to come.

Thank you very, very much.

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