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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE
AT THE WHITE HOUSE CEREMONY FOR
NATIONAL DRUNK AND DRUGGED DRIVING AWARENESS WEEK
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WASHINGTON, D.C.

I can't think of a more appropriate way to begin National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week than to receive this progress report from the National Commission Against Drunk Driving, for it represents the strong commitment of so many Americans to this effort. And it serves to heighten awareness of the problem of drunk driving: the fact that last year, of the over 44,000 Americans killed in auto accidents, at least half of those accidents were alcohol-related.

I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight a few of the many outstanding efforts in the national campaign against drunk driving. Each one of you in this room has played an important role in this effort and your dedication and hard work are an inspiration to us all.

I would also like to introduce Norma Phillips, President of MADD -- Mothers Against Drunk Driving. This organization has grown in five years from a small group of people knocking on doors in California, trying to give meaning to a child's tragic death, to a national movement with 366 chapters and thousands of supporters in 47 states and the District of Columbia. And there are now international chapters in Canada, Great Britain and New Zealand, as well. This impressive organization has been most successful in raising the consciousness level of the American people, overwhelming decades of public apathy and legislative inertia.

Also on the dais with me today is Jerry Sachs, President of Washington's own Capital Centre. Over the past three years, the "Cap" Centre, with Jerry Sachs at the helm, has spearheaded a comprehensive program to reduce drunk driving in the Washington metropolitan area.

And David Stern, Commissioner of the National Basketball Association, has lent that organization's invaluable support to our efforts against drunk driving, and we sincerely thank him.

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And during this week, state police and highway patrol agencies in 40 states are augmenting National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week with Operation CARE -- which stands for Combined Accident Reduction Effort -- a campaign that emphasizes stepped-up enforcement activities and sobriety checkpoints to remove drunk drivers from the highways.

Ladies and gentlemen: there has been a great consciousness-raising taking place in this country in recent years, thanks largely to you and other concerned Americans who are lending their support to the ever growing national campaign against drunk driving. This national campaign is a prime example of the success public and private sector partnerships can achieve and has been the hallmark of our highway safety initiatives. As President Reagan stressed in proclaiming National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week, "With the continued involvement of private citizens working together, and action at all levels of government, we can begin to control the problem of drunken and drugged driving."

The effectiveness of a public-private partnership is illustrated in the contribution to this campaign by one of America's top singing stars -- Michael Jackson. Michael joined us in the fight against drug and alcohol abuse by donating the rights to his hit song, "Beat It," --a commitment representing thousands of dollars in royalties. And Stevie Wonder, another talented American, made the first public service music video called, "Don't Drive Drunk." The impact this video has had on our young people has just been tremendous. And because of the assistance of the media, these public service announcements were able to reach millions of Americans.

Barbara Mandrell has lent her support to our safety belt campaign after she and her children survived a head-on crash -- at a combined speed of almost 100 miles an hour -- because they were wearing their safety belts. For those of us involved in highway safety, we know the best protection against the drunk driver is using that safety belt every time you get in the car -- even on short trips.

Programs to discourage drunk driving are yielding tangible results. Deaths caused by drunk drivers have dropped 24 percent between 1980 and 1984. This fact is very encouraging to all of us who have worked so long to reverse the heartbreak caused by drunk driving.

Drunk driving is the number one killer of our young people and last year, the President signed a bill encouraging states to set 21 as their legal minimum drinking age. Thirty-seven states have now done so. Although we normally defer to the states on traffic law issues, as the President said, a uniform drinking age will do away with "blood borders," where teenagers have a positive incentive to drink and drive, to cross state lines to take advantage of lower drinking age laws and then make the return trip home "under the influence."

And progress has been made as well in our campaign to encourage all Americans to use their safety belts. Today, 16 states and the District of

Columbia have mandatory safety belt use laws -- laws that will protect more than 100 million people.

The fact that one out of two Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash in their lifetime is a trend that can be reversed if we intervene to prevent friends from drinking and driving.

The President has called upon each of us to "help make the difference between a needless tragedy and the blessings of health and life." I thank you for your continued support, your heartfelt commitment and for helping us to make a difference -- a positive difference -- in people's lives. I look forward to working alongside you to ensure that the momentum for these crucial changes does not die, but becomes increasingly stronger. We will push on until every last drunk driver is off the roads and highways of this country.

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