

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden
Full Committee Markup of H.R. 767, H.R. 772, H.R. 880, H.R. 931,
H.R. 2422, H.R. 3387, and H.R. 3388
July 27, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

As my staff director, Ray Baum, often likes to say, ‘the fun never stops,’ and we’ll be working in that spirit today with our fourth full committee markup this Congress. Before us today are seven commonsense bills that seek to protect consumers on our roadways, advance public health, and modernize the nation’s drinking water infrastructure.

Today, we’re taking an important step towards making our roadways safer and reducing the rising number of traffic-related fatalities. We can set the stage for the continued development of self-driving cars and ensure that America stays the innovation leader it is.

I truly believe the bipartisan bill-drafting process for self-driving legislation is an example of our committee at its best – working together to pursue the common goal of saving lives. Our aim was to develop a regulatory structure that allows for industry to safely innovate with significant government oversight – as safety must be the chief priority. And I believe today’s legislation strikes that critical balance.

Shifting gears for a moment, we’re also considering five public health bills today. First is H.R. 767, the Stop, Observe, Ask, and Respond, or SOAR, to Health and Wellness Act of 2017. It will provide much-needed training to health professionals, so they can better identify and appropriately treat human trafficking victims.

H.R. 880, the MISSION Zero Act, will create a military-civilian partnership grant program to advance cutting-edge trauma care in civilian settings. By integrating the Defense Department’s successful care model into civilian settings, we will improve trauma care and save lives.

H.R. 931, the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act of 2017, will create a national registry to voluntarily collect information to better understand cancer incidence in firefighters, and help work toward protective measures.

H.R. 2422, the Action for Dental Health Act of 2017, will help target important resources to increase access to oral health education and dental services to communities in need.

H.R. 772, the Common Sense Nutrition Disclosure Act of 2017, would revise FDA's nutrition disclosure standards to make them more flexible for retail food establishments and avoid a patchwork of inconsistent and overly burdensome state and local regulations.

I realize some of these bills will need offsets, and I look forward to continuing to work together in a bipartisan fashion to resolve any cut-go issues before the House floor.

Last, but certainly not least, we have legislation related to the nation's drinking water. Moving a serious reauthorization of any major environmental law, like the Safe Drinking Water Act, takes a lot of cooperation and willingness to talk out the issues and find common ground. That common ground has brought us to where we are today. This bill focuses on three main principles: increasing funding to address drinking water systems' physical needs, aiding states and utilities with compliance and operation of the drinking water program, and encouraging the wisest use of money that is spent.

Cumulatively these bills represent this committee's dedication to advancing thoughtful solutions that put American consumers and patients first, and exemplify our dedication to work across the aisle on things we agree on. I'd like to thank my colleagues on both side of the aisle for their good faith efforts on these important bills.