

**Opening Statement Republican Leader Greg Walden**  
**Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee**  
**Hearing “Enhancing Vehicle Technology to Prevent Drunk Driving”**  
**March 14, 2019**  
*As Prepared for Delivery*

Good morning, and thank you Chair Schakowsky for holding today’s hearing on drunk driving and ways in which we can use technology to help prevent it. I would like to note that last Congress, this subcommittee held a hearing to examine the growing problem of drug-impaired driving. The fact is, impaired driving, whether it be alcohol-impaired or drug-impaired, is a serious public risk that continues to tragically cut so many lives short.

Nearly 11,000 Americans lose their lives on our roadways each year because of the reckless decision to get behind the wheel after having consumed alcohol. That is almost 1 person every 48 minutes. Just think, while we are here discussing ways in which we can address this problem, we will lose several lives. It is simply unacceptable. Data indicates that younger adults are more at risk to be involved in an alcohol related fatal crash. Among fatal crashes, the highest percentage of drunk drivers is for ages 21 to 24 followed by 25 to 34. We must promote innovation and education to save our youth.

Drug-impaired driving has also taken hold on our roadways and the terrible scourge of opioid addiction shows its lethal effects on driving.

The number of American drivers killed in car crashes in which drugs were detected has steadily increased. Just a couple years ago, almost half of all fatally-injured drivers with known results tested positive for drugs. The ten-year trend demonstrates that drug-impaired driving has increased despite seeing decreases in alcohol-impaired driving. But let me be clear, it is never acceptable to drive impaired. Even the slightest consumption of alcohol or drugs can have devastating effects.

Thankfully, we are seeing technological advancements and innovations that can help address the risks of impaired driving. These technology-based solutions include ridesharing companies giving consumers more transportation options, appropriate uses of ignition interlock devices for those convicted of driving impaired, breath- and touch-based sensors, and self-driving vehicle technology.

Taking a step back, the committee has been focused on roadway safety and technology to improve safety on the roads throughout our history. With the recent rises of highway fatalities, I would encourage this subcommittee to continue to support new technologies that can drive that number down as we see incredible investment and growth trajectories for companies developing self-driving technologies.

Last Congress, this committee focused on self-driving vehicle technology that could drastically reduce impaired driving from our roadways altogether. We worked across the aisle in a bipartisan fashion to help address the unacceptable number of lives we lose each year and crafted the SELF DRIVE Act.

The SELF DRIVE Act was championed by Representatives Latta, Schakowsky, Upton, and Dingell – I want to thank you all for your leadership on this issue. I believe the SELF DRIVE Act was an example of this committee at its absolute best: working together to address a real public crisis. As a result of that approach, we were able to pass the SELF DRIVE Act out of committee on a 54-0 vote and it eventually unanimously passed the House.

As a reflection of our commitment to support technology to reduce all highway fatalities, including those caused by drunk driving, I hope this committee will prioritize this bipartisan legislation issue to improve safety, increase mobility options, and support American innovation and jobs.

Reducing impaired driving is a bipartisan issue. We all care deeply about protecting lives on the roadways and doing what we can to address the safety risk of impaired driving. This issue has impacted every

person in this room and I hope with that in mind we can continue to work together on solutions.

I want to thank our distinguished panel for being here today and I look forward to our discussion.

**[Yield to Rep. Latta for your remaining time]**

Thank you. I yield back.