

**Opening Statement of Republican Leader Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and Commerce  
“Autonomous Vehicles: Promises and Challenges of  
Evolving Automotive Technologies”  
February 11, 2020**

*As Prepared for Delivery*

Thank you Madame Chairwoman for holding this hearing today, and thank you to our witnesses for being here and sharing your thoughts on this important legislative effort.

This subcommittee did some amazing work the last few years. We laid out a compelling framework for the United States to lead the world in research, development, and manufacturing of autonomous vehicles. We also gave people hope. We gave hope to the people currently facing a life of restriction – introducing a whole new world of mobility for those with physical disabilities and seniors. On that note, I’d like to recognize that not only on the witness panel is the head of the National Federation of the Blind, Mark Riccobono, but I am also pleased to welcome from my great state of Oregon, the president of the state organization, Carla McQuillan.

From the first “Disrupter Series” hearing on self-driving cars in November 2016, three other hearings would follow, along with more than 300 stakeholder meetings. This process led to markups in July of 2017, where AV legislation was approved unanimously, and continued to House passage in September of 2017 with the same consensus result.

Our Senate friends—who were committed to our shared goal—were not able to clear legislation in their chamber. It was a disappointing conclusion when you consider twelve bills—from members of both sides of the aisle in this committee—were rolled into that final product. I have always believed that is the way this place is supposed to work: a bipartisan, collaborative process.

Despite the work that was done then and the setback of coming up short, we are still here today talking about a need to pass an AV bill in the House. The U.S. is in a global race to AVs, but today the cost of inaction is clear: we are behind.

Now, I certainly respect the fact that my friends across the aisle have the gavel now, and it is ultimately up to them how the process should be run. Given that, we have respected a process that the majority called for last year on how we reach an agreement not just amongst ourselves but also in accord with the bipartisan leadership of the Senate Commerce Committee. I am anxiously awaiting the consensus from that process, which I hope is imminent, so we can move expeditiously to the next step of this discussion.

On that note, I am pleased that we have a witness from the American Association for Justice on the panel to provide the organization's perspective on how we might reach this elusive deal. I want to be very transparent – it should be clear from the history of this process that Republicans and Democrats on this panel worked very hard with your organization to get sign-off and support when we first moved this bill. You can imagine my disappointment when you all asked for more changes, in the Senate, despite the deal we had struck. But it was even more curious that when Senate Republicans and Democrats ceded to the provisions you were seeking, you still didn't support a deal.

This was a bridge too far, so you can understand why I'm admittedly reticent to ask whether what you all advocated for last Congress is enough. And if it's not, why? How are we going to deliver for the blind, the disabled, the elderly if we can't reach a compromise?

My plea to all of you is this: it takes not only a compromise amongst the members on this dais, but also all of you at this table. We are all Americans, and we are in this together. We are talking about U.S. leading the race and setting the rules, or having it dictated to us by other countries. Other countries able to direct adoption and data collection, notably where citizens aren't lucky enough to have input from safety organizations. We are talking about giving vulnerable populations an entirely new ability to live their lives with a new level of mobility. We are talking about how this initiative will lend itself to reducing emissions to protect our environment.

All of this can be done without compromising safety. In fact, the roads will all be safer. We have the opportunity to

prevent a family from experiencing the overwhelming despair from the loss of a loved one due to human errors on the road. We have the ability to break down the barriers to mobility facing seniors and the disabled community. And we can create new economic opportunity by ensuring the United States can be the global leader in this emerging technology. That is my ask to all of you, work with us, and let's get this done.

Thank you, and I yield back.