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Policies and Politics of Auto Safety

Louis V. Lombardo

2016 Election Year Politics & Policies

Elections have consequences as Paul Krugman and NY Times readers who commented remind us. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/04/opinion/elections-have-consequences.html>

Elections indeed have life or death or disability consequences for our Safety and Happiness. Political Science is the study of who gets what, when, where, why, and how. So that people can be better aware of our choices this year, consider our auto safety history – and our future. As Nader recently pointed out: "*If politicians and elections are for sale, guess who's going to be the highest bidder?*" See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/blog-naderinterviewwrongful.php>

Motor Vehicle Safety Problem

Historically, since 1900, more than 3.6 million Americans have died of injuries, nearly 1 billion Americans have suffered injuries. That is comparable to 3 times the number of Americans who died of wounds and 500 times the number wounded in all wars since 1776.

Currently, on an average day nearly 100 Americans die of motor vehicle related injuries and about 400 suffer serious injuries. DOT values such daily losses at nearly \$2 Billion. Americans bear the suffering, grief, and tears.

See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/clock.php>

and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_military_casualties_of_war

Timeline of Deaths, Disabilities, and Policies of Auto Safety

1924 - By 1924 the U.S. had lost **140,000** lives due to vehicle injuries. Republican President Calvin Coolidge addressed the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety noting "*With the deplorable and continuing increase in highway mortality and injury, the time is highly appropriate for a comprehensive study of the causes that we may have proper understanding of conditions and so may intelligently provide remedies.... The evil you are combating is so widespread as to be of national concern and we do well to*

look at it with a countrywide vision. But its solution does not rest in national action. Highway control is primarily for the states, and it is best that this is so.”

Herbert Hoover opened the Conference noting annual statistics of “*22,600 deaths and 678,000 serious personal injuries....About 85 per cent of our street and highway accidents are due to the automobile.... I am convinced that a large corrective must be more vigorous punishment. The great majority of accidents are each and every one of them in themselves proof of guilt in either incompetence, carelessness, or recklessness.... Your committees are not proposing any federal government activities....after all, if we save the life of one child, all the money and all the time and all the effort expended in the past or in the future will be well worth the efforts and expense.*” See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/assets/24P11.pdf>

1965 – In 1965 Nader wrote “Unsafe at Any Speed.” See 50th Anniversary video at <https://vimeo.com/147524636>

1966 – By 1966, the U.S. had lost **1.5 million** lives to vehicle injuries, and Democrat President Lyndon Johnson declared in the January 12, 1966 State of the Union message:

“Our people have a right to feel secure in their homes and on their streets—and that right just must be secured.

Nor can we fail to arrest the destruction of life and property on our highways.

I will propose a Highway Safety Act of 1966 to seek an end to this mounting tragedy.” See <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches/speech-4035>

On September 9, 1966, President Johnson signed the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Highway Safety Act into law noting:

“In this century, more than 1,500,000 of our fellow citizens have died on our streets and highways: nearly three times as many Americans as we have lost in all our wars.

Every 11 minutes a citizen is killed on the road. Every day 9,000 are killed or injured--9,000! Last year 50,000 were killed.

And the tragic totals have mounted every year.

It makes auto accidents the biggest cause of death and injury among Americans under 35. And if our accident rate continues, one out of every two Americans can look forward to being injured by a car during his lifetime--one out of every two!

*Starting with our 1968 models, American and foreign,
--We are going to assure our citizens that every new car they buy is as safe as modern knowledge knows how to build it.*

--We are going to protect drivers against confusing and misleading tire standards.

We are going to establish Federal research and testing centers to probe the causes of traffic accidents.

For years now, we have spent millions of dollars to understand and to fight polio and other childhood diseases. Yet up until now we have tolerated a raging epidemic of highway death--which has killed more of our youth than all other diseases combined.

Through the Highway Safety Act, we are going to find out more about highway disease--and we are going to find out how to cure it."

See <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=27847>

1968 – By 1968 the U.S. had lost **1.6 million** lives to vehicle injuries and Republican Richard Nixon was elected President. By 1971, he had reorganized the air pollution program out of the Public Health Service into the EPA (symbolized by a flower). He downgraded the mission from protecting the people’s health to “protecting” the environment. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/1970-PolutionControlEfforts.php>

On April 27, 1971, Nixon met with Henry Ford II and Lee Iacocca in the Oval Office. Nixon tape transcript (p.1) captures the President’s “pro-business” words:

“[Unintelligible] views are, are, are frankly, uh, whether it’s the environment or pollution or Naderism or consumerism, are extremely pro-business. Uh, we are fighting, frankly, a delaying action in many instances.” See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/assets/Nixon-Transcriptions.pdf>

In a Confidential memo dated August 23, 1971, Lewis Powell (who had previously defended the Tobacco industry) wrote: “*Perhaps the single most effective antagonist of American business is Ralph Nader...*” See http://reclaimdemocracy.org/powell_memo_lewis/

Nixon appointed Powell to the Supreme Court where he served from January 1972 until June 1987. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_F._Powell,_Jr.#Powell_Memorandum

In November 1971 I was fired from EPA for blowing the whistle on rigging the auto emission test procedures. Years later after my lawsuit against the National Academy of Sciences for access to documents to prove my charges of test rigging were denied all the way to the Supreme Court, the Nixon tapes (p.4) revealed Henry Ford II discussing help with test rigging from EPA Administrator Ruckelshaus. Test rigging goes on to this day. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/assets/Nixon-Transcriptions.pdf> and <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/blog-medal.php>

The Nixon administration went on to pit lives against money. “Costs” vs. “Benefits” or who pays what costs and who gets what benefits? Martin Albaum, author of “Safety Sells” wrote: “starting with the Nixon Administration, the White House issued increasingly broad requirements for agencies to analyze the economic effects of proposed regulations.” See <http://www.safetysells.org/chapter7.pdf>

1976 – By 1976 the U.S. had lost **2 million** lives to vehicle injuries. Democrat Jimmy Carter was elected President and Joan Claybrook was appointed Administrator of NHTSA. Under Joan’s life saving leadership the nation benefited from the automatic crash protection rule (airbags), the New Car Assessment Program (NCAP), publication of research and crash fatality data, etc. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/1980crash.php>

1980 – By 1980 the U.S. had lost **2.2 million** lives to vehicle injuries. Republican Ronald Reagan was elected President and Joan Claybrook was fired. Reagan replaced Joan Claybrook with Raymond A. Peck, Jr., a former coal industry lobbyist. The airbag rule was rescinded. NHTSA was subjected to personnel actions that reduced staff from 900 to 600 safety workers – a reduced and more industry leaning staff level that has persisted to this day. For history see Car Safety Wars at

http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/assets/Trial_2015_09Sept_AmmonsreviewofLemov.pdf and <http://www.safetysells.org/chapter5.pdf>

1988 – By 1988 the U.S. had lost **2.6 million** lives to vehicle injuries and Republican George H.W. Bush appointed Jerry R. Curry Administrator of NHTSA. Gen. Curry defended the auto industry, notably on rollover crash

deaths and injuries, while at NHTSA and afterwards became a Ford consultant. See <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/rollover/interviews/curry.html>

1992 – By 1992 the U.S. had lost nearly **2.8 million** lives to vehicle injuries. Democrat Bill Clinton was elected and appointed Riccardo Martinez Administrator of NHTSA. Dr. Martinez was the first emergency physician to head NHTSA. He created the Crash Injury Research & Engineering Network (CIREN) program by combining several trauma center research projects to study crashes, injuries, treatments, and outcomes.

Disclosure: I was involved. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/ciren.php>

2000 – By the year, 2000 the U.S. had lost **3.1 million** lives to vehicle injuries. Republican George W. Bush was selected by the Supreme Court (5 to 4 decision) to be President. See <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2000/12/bush-d29.html>

The Administration of George W. Bush was marked by takeover of DOT/NHTSA policies by auto industry related people. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/blog-lastdecade.php>

2008 - By 2008, the U.S. had lost **3.4 million** lives to vehicle injuries. Democrat Barack Obama was elected and appointed Republican Ray LaHood to be Secretary of Transportation and David L. Strickland to be Administrator of NHTSA. After 4 shocking years of safety scandals, Strickland departed through the NHTSA Revolving Door to work for the lobbying firm Venable. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/blog-NHTSA-revolvingdoor.php> and <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/blog-casjeepjudgement.php> and summarized in NY Times at

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/29/opinion/weak-oversight-deadly-cars.html?ref=opinion&_r=0

NHTSA key auto safety positions continue to be held by former GM employees. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/assets/CFCV-MonthlyReport-March2014.pdf>

President Obama appointed Eric Holder to be Attorney General. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/blog-holderresign.php>

Eric Holder previously worked for Covington and Burling and now has returned to Covington and Burling a firm that has represented GM, the tobacco industry, the NFL, and more than half the Fortune 100. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/blog-decind2016.php> and <http://www.autosafety.org/cas-statement-gm-criminal-settlement-justice-department>

Ralph Nader speaks on Covington and Burling work against victims. See <http://www.corporatecrimereporter.com/news/200/ralph-nader-radio-hour-tackles-covington-burling-philip-howard-atra-tiger-joyce-and-governor-jerry-brown/>

As of September 2015, GM acknowledged 174 GM Ignition Switch Deaths. If the Department of Justice had used the DOT value per life at \$9.2 million, the fine against GM would have amounted to \$1.6 billion. Instead we see that the Justice Department agreed with GM to a \$900 million settlement.

See <http://www.autosafety.org/cas-statement-gm-criminal-settlement-justice-department> and

<https://blog.nader.org/2015/09/17/for-immediate-release-statement-by-ralph-nader-on-gm-deferred-prosecution/> and

http://www.autosafety.org/sites/default/files/imce_staff_uploads/Death%20Cases%20-%20PR.pdf

Imagine President Obama issuing an Executive Order that specified using in all settle agreements that all fines have a monetary value of at least the DOT \$9.2 million per life. And since deaths will continue until all vehicles are repaired the fines should be open ended adding \$9.2 million for every additional death.

Imagine that the Executive Order also required that all settlement agreements must specify that corporate fines must **not** be tax deductible.

See <http://www.uspirgedfund.org/news/usf/government-agencies-allow-corporations-write-billions-federal-settlement-payments>

By 2016, the U.S. has lost nearly **3.7 million** lives to vehicle injuries. See <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/clock.php>

Citizen's Election in 2016 For Safety

If citizens want a future of Safety and Happiness as called for in the Declaration of Independence, then we must vote for a change for the better.

Imagine asking the candidates to pledge a Vision Zero Goal to end crash deaths in or serious injuries in or by new vehicles in a decade. See Vision Zero initiatives around the world at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vision_Zero

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Proverbs 29:18

Without a safety Vision Zero, the U.S. politically and irresponsibly faces vehicle violence forevermore.

Without safety votes, the U.S. currently can expect that over the next decade the cumulative number of lives lost in the U.S. will exceed **4 million**.

In addition to voting, Americans can use their power in the market by choosing to purchase safe vehicles. See “Car Book” at <http://www.autosafety.org/>