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Car Safety Wars – A Century of Deaths & Injuries & Political Battles

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A Century of Safety, Deaths, Injuries, Dollars & Battles Won & Lost

“Car Safety Wars” a new book by Michael R. Lemov has been published on how people and corporate interests have battled for a century over “your Safety and Happiness”. Your rights (and responsibilities) to “Safety and Happiness” are in the Declaration of Independence. This book describes how people worked for decades to influence policies affecting safety.

Lemov is a lawyer with high-level experience in the legislative and executive branches of the Federal government as well as the private sector.

“Car Safety Wars” describes in Lemov’s words: “a citizen-led triumph of great impact. Although it took decades, it represents a lesson in democratic, responsive and effective government.”

Disclosure: I provided fact-checking service on this book and I learned a lot.

Saving People

As “Car Safety Wars” was going to print, NHTSA published a new report that found “estimates that the fatality risk in the average car or LTV on the road in 2012 would be 56 percent lower than in the average vehicle on the road in 1960....The report estimates that vehicle safety technologies saved 613,501 lives from 1960 through 2012, including 27,621 in 2012.” See <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812069.pdf>

Progress can and must continue. How many Americans know?

- The number of people that have died of their injuries in crashes is at this writing 3,664,247 Americans – nearly 3 times the number of Americans that have died in all wars since 1776.
- The number of people that have suffered injuries in crashes is at this writing estimated to be 753,559,500 Americans – nearly 500 times the number of Americans that have been wounded in all wars since 1776.

- Currently, nearly 100 Americans die of their injuries in crashes on an average day in the U.S.A.
- Currently, nearly 400 Americans suffer serious injuries in crashes on an average day in the U.S.A. These include brain injuries, spinal cord injuries resulting in quadriplegia/paraplegia, amputations, and burns.
- Currently, estimated costs of \$2 Billion are associated with crashes, deaths and injuries on an average day in the U.S.A.

Against this background of tragedies of pain, suffering and horrific losses, we face a future of crash deaths, injuries, and losses – as far as the eye can see. No Vision Zero Goal or Plan from the Obama Administration yet.

Having worked in the trenches to advance safety for nearly 4 decades, I must admit, that I was not as aware then as I am now of how accurate the term “Car Safety Wars” is to describe the century of battles that continue to this day in the U.S.A.

Wars involve tragedies, horrific deaths, catastrophic injuries, trillions of dollars of losses, victims, families bankrupted, secrets, governments corrupted by powerful economic interests, and decisions to deploy enormous financial resources, in this case - against your “Safety and Happiness”.

See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_military_casualties_of_war And <http://www.careforcrashvictims.com/clock.php>

Author Lemov gives readers a clear, honest, and fair insider’s view of battles won and lost over your “Safety and Happiness.” With this book more of us will learn lessons we need to know to protect ourselves.

How many Americans know that there is a war going on against their Safety and Happiness?

The NY Times recently ran an Op Ed by Clarence Ditlow and Ralph Nader that called attention to the current problems in the government safety program – and what needs to be done.

“What explains this neglect? Over time, the N.H.T.S.A. has been captured by the industry it regulates. Through the ’70s, it aggressively litigated cases to force recalls, and it caught most defects early in the life of a vehicle. Beginning in the ’80s, however, numerous officials — including Diane K. Steed, Jerry Ralph Curry, Sue Bailey and David L. Strickland, who all

served as head of the agency, and Erika Z. Jones, Jacqueline S. Glassman and Paul Jackson Rice, who all served as chief counsel to the agency — have gone on to become consultants, lawyers or expert witnesses for auto companies.

What’s more, the agency is heavily populated by former industry employees. Ms. Glassman, for example, had been a lawyer for Chrysler before working at the agency (and is now [at a law firm](#) that represents auto companies). The agency’s last non-acting administrator, Mr. Strickland, went to work in January of 2014 for a [firm](#) representing Chrysler — the same month the agency approved an inadequate recall of Chrysler Jeeps with fuel tanks liable to explode as a result of rear impacts.

Although Congress has given the N.H.T.S.A. regulatory tools that the agency failed to use, Congress has not given it the two things it needs most: sufficient funding, and the power to bring criminal penalties against auto companies. The agency’s annual vehicle safety budget is a puny \$134 million. Unlike other federal regulators, the N.H.T.S.A. does not have its own research and test facility.

Since the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act was enacted in 1966, the industry has blocked any meaningful provision for criminal penalties that would make company executives who concealed defects or decided not to recall dangerous vehicles subject to prison sentences. No single reform would change corporate behavior as much as this.

Only a complete overhaul of the agency’s culture will prevent future recalls, since automakers will always place sales and profits over safety and innovation. This should start with closing the revolving door, adopting criminal penalties and increasing funding. All auto companies should have an independent, government-certified safety ombudsman to investigate complaints from whistle-blowers and to report defects directly to the chief executive and the agency.”

See <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/29/opinion/weak-oversight-deadly-cars.html>

“Car Safety Wars” empowers us to be informed consumers and voters. With Lemov’s work we are now able to make wiser choices to protect our own “Safety and Happiness.” It is our right and responsibility to do so.