



U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Motor Vehicle and Highway Safety Improvement Act of 2012 or "Mariah's Act"

The Motor Vehicle and Highway Safety Improvement Act of 2012 or "Mariah's Act" in Title I of Division C reauthorizes the safety programs administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for FY 2012 and FY 2013 and enhances vehicle and highway safety with new initiatives and administrative reforms.

Background:

Despite great strides in highway safety over the past decades, NHTSA still faces daunting safety issues that contribute to the safety of motor vehicles.

- An average of 90 people died a day in automobile accidents.
- In 2010, there were 5.5 million automotive accidents resulting in 33,000 deaths. Of these:
 - 10,000 were killed by drunk drivers
 - 3,000 were killed by distracted drivers
- Modern passenger vehicles increasingly rely on computers and advanced electronics, which require NHTSA to have sufficient resources and technical proficiency to promote public safety

Highway Safety Grants:

The NHTSA title would reauthorize NHTSA's existing grant programs and create new grant programs to address emerging driving issues. Specifically, the NHTSA title would:

- Update NHTSA's highway safety, occupant protection and child safety grant programs; and
- Create new grant programs for distracted driving and graduated drivers licensing.

Enforcement Authority and Transparency:

The NHTSA title would provide the agency with enhanced enforcement authority and promote greater transparency at the agency. Specifically, the title would:

- Strengthen NHTSA's enforcement authorities through increased civil penalties for manufacturers;
- Improve the agency's ability to control imports of defective motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment;
- Increase transparency and accountability in the auto industry by improving public disclosure of safety information and adding whistleblower protections for auto employees; and
- Update provisions that limit the revolving door of employment between NHTSA and industry.

Advanced Technologies and Safety

The NHTSA title also includes provisions that would strengthen NHTSA's expertise in advanced technologies and would further direct the agency to promulgate important safety regulations. Specifically, the title would:

- Update and modernize the agency's motor vehicle research and development authority;
- Require NHTSA to prioritize child safety through rulemakings that address issues such as child seats and unattended children in vehicles; and
- Direct NHTSA to issue new safety rules addressing matters such as break override, electronic systems performance, pushbutton ignitions, and daytime and nighttime visibility of agricultural equipment operated on public roads.