

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing on “Volkswagen’s Emissions Cheating Allegations: Initial Questions”
October 8, 2015**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Fahrvergnügen – its what makes a car a Volkswagen. That ad campaign swept the nation in the 1990s. Volkswagen has long enjoyed an almost cultish following dating back to the beetle, VW van, the rabbit. But through the years something apparently became rotten in Wolfsburg and cheating and betrayal became part of the VW game plan.

There is a lot we still do not know about Volkswagen’s actions, or their motivations, in attempting to skirt emissions standards. But regardless of intent, they have betrayed the trust of regulators, dealers and, most importantly, the driving public.

The most famous congressional hearing question is: “what did you know and when did you know it?” asked by Senator Howard Baker. Now we learn you knew some 18 months ago. So we add: What did you really do to fix it and come clean versus simply going along? But, ultimately, the saying rings true: cheaters never prosper. That’s why we are here today.

We have many questions about how we got here, and the road ahead. Why would one of the world’s largest automakers go to such lengths to avoid emissions requirements? Who was responsible for these decisions and why did they for years, even as the technology improved? If they were willing to cut corners here, what else have they done? How will you fix this flaw and when? Will the fix affect the performance of these vehicles?

Unraveling these questions will take time and I do not expect we will discover all the answers today. But if VW is serious about rebuilding this broken trust, its leaders will need to demonstrate a serious commitment to answer these and many other questions prompted by its actions. This requires transparency, cooperation and clear, consistent communication – not only with this committee, the EPA, and other ongoing investigations, but also with its customers, suppliers, dealers, and the general public.

VW will inevitably pay a steep price for its dirty little secret. How it responds to this failure will go a long way to rebuilding, or further eroding, the public’s trust. VW must also consider what implications these actions have for the thousands of Americans it employ, including at their facility in Auburn Hills, Michigan. Every single one of us who has ties to Michigan is proud of our rich tradition that is so closely intertwined with the success of the automobile. In fact, Michigan is one of several states that have launched their own investigations. Recent reports are sickening, and cannot be tolerated. All automakers must advance by imagination and innovation – not by gaming the system and breaking the law.

We will get some additional insight today but the committee’s investigation is just beginning. This hearing is an important step. As we receive documents and information, new details are certain to emerge. I look forward to getting to the bottom of these issues as quickly as possible. I take this very personally. As the author of the TREAD Act to protect the public, Congress was clear in our work to protect consumers from abuses from automakers.

Volkswagen has betrayed a nation – a nation of regulators, loyalists, and innocent customers. Either clean it up, or get off the road.