

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade
Legislative Hearing on VIN Database and Auto Whistleblower Bills
September 25, 2015**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Everyone knows I'm from Michigan - the auto state - and that is something I take great pride in. Folks also know that I am disappointed that this committee has been forced to hold multiple hearings over the past few years on motor vehicle recalls. But even when facing these issues, I remain an optimist. I believe that cars are safer today than ever before and the data shows that. The new technologies that are being developed and deployed will make us even safer on the road. Today, we continue our work to keep families in Michigan and across the country safe on the roads by focusing on two bills to improve safety.

The Motor Vehicle Safety Whistleblower Act goes great lengths to ensure that safety violations don't go unreported. Almost fifteen years ago, in the wake of the tragic circumstances involving Ford-Firestone, I authored the bipartisan TREAD Act to get automakers to identify and fix defects earlier and remove flawed cars from the road immediately. While that law has prevented several safety issues from becoming serious disasters, the early warning reporting regime is greatly dependent on the commitment of the auto industry to make it a success. The safety incentives provided in the Motor Vehicle Safety Whistleblower Act are meant to help foster that commitment because as we know, reporting delays cost lives.

The Improving Recall Tracking Act is another legislative proposal we will review today. With any recall, consumers must be notified of the defect so they can get their vehicles fixed. It is unacceptable that there continue to be vehicle owners that have not been notified of a defect or serious safety risk because they cannot be located. Currently, we have 50 different state systems to notify consumers of safety issues leading to unfortunate delays in getting lifesaving information out to the right people. I am also troubled that the challenge of notifying consumers could get worse as the development of new technology platforms enable owners to sell vehicles in nontraditional ways.

Consumer notification is a key part of ensuring that the recall process works. During today's review of the Improving Recall Tracking Act, I look forward to hearing about how the private sector is working with the auto industry to identify consumers affected by a safety recall. I also look forward to hearing how driver registration and vehicle identification numbers are kept up to date in databases maintained by manufacturers and commercial entities, and what considerations are being made to improve the consumer notification process.

As I have said before, there can be no margin of error when it comes to vehicle safety. Lives are on the line – and the public deserves the peace of mind that they are safe every time they get behind the wheel. I thank Chairman Burgess and this subcommittee for its continued commitment to protecting the driving public.

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