

The Honorable C.W. Bill Young  
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Conference Report 108-401 to the Transportation, Treasury and Independent Agencies Appropriation Act, 2004 (p. 969) directed the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to:

*...explore whether there is a more fitting theme for the impaired driving program than 'You Drink & Drive. You Lose.' and to report findings and recommendations to the House and Senate Appropriations committees in a letter by January 30, 2004, as proposed by the Senate.*

After polling State highway safety offices, NHTSA has determined that it should pursue the development of a more enforcement-oriented theme than the current *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* theme. Accordingly, States will be notified that development and testing of a more enforcement-oriented theme is underway and advised to deplete their stock of materials with the current theme. The market research and testing required to develop a new theme are expected to be complete in Fiscal Year 2004. In the meantime, the current *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* campaign will be continued for at least another year.

Initially conceived in 1999, the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* campaign was developed to serve as the theme for the criminal justice aspect of the Agency's impaired driving communications plan. This theme is one of three communications platforms supporting NHTSA's impaired driving program. *Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk* addresses social norming and *Zero Tolerance Means Zero Chances* addresses underage drinking. Together, the three provide a balanced approach to the impaired driving program, offering multiple media opportunities throughout the year with focused messages that local organizations can use for their outreach programs.

The *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* campaign was designed to reframe the issue from *drunk* driving to *impaired* driving, focusing on the negative consequences for driving while impaired—losing a license, costly fines and attorneys' fees, loss of freedom through arrest, loss of a motor vehicle and, potentially, the loss of life. During the late 1980's and early 1990's, the

Agency made strides in reaching so-called “social drinkers,” with the *Friends Don’t Let Friends Drive Drunk* campaign. Studies demonstrated that hard-core drinking drivers did not heed the social norming messages, and they had not changed their behavior. Impaired driving fatalities were beginning to rise, and the blood alcohol concentration of those killed in alcohol-related fatalities remained high. The *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* campaign was designed to breathe new life into the criminal justice portion of the Agency’s impaired driving program, focusing on those hard-core drinking drivers with the clear message that if they chose to drink and drive, they would face the negative consequences.

Using the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* theme, NHTSA developed a variety of printed materials to assist States and communities in their impaired driving programs—materials that provide the backdrop for a unified, national message to support the law enforcement crackdowns. From model policies on setting up and conducting sobriety checkpoints to web-based planners to assist traffic safety advocates and community leaders in supporting local impaired driving programs, all materials focus on support for high visibility enforcement and the negative consequences of driving while impaired.

Since its inception, 33 States have begun to employ the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* tag line in their impaired driving programs. Because of this, NHTSA requested the assistance of the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) to explore any concerns the States would have if the tag line/theme were changed. A 2003 poll of their membership revealed that a number of the States use the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* tag line because it is printed on NHTSA materials and provides a unified national message—particularly important in light of today’s mobile society. However, it is not one that they would have selected.

While GHSA recommended that a more enforcement-oriented tag line be developed, several States indicated that they had invested significant funding in State-specific materials with the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* tag line and, if it were to change, those materials could no longer be distributed. It was suggested that, for the immediate future, NHTSA keep the tag line and change the logo from the glass and road graphic to a more enforcement-focused graphic such as handcuffs or jail bars. In so doing, States could continue to use their materials containing the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* tag line while NHTSA conducts the market research and testing required to develop a new one.

NHTSA recently contracted with the communication/public relations firm, The Tombras Group, to support the Agency’s impaired driving and occupant protection programs. In the coming year, this firm will be tasked with developing and testing a more suitable theme for the criminal justice communications platform in support of the impaired driving program. The Agency will also work with the Tombras Group to redesign the current graphic to better

reflect the criminal justice aspects of the impaired driving program as a short-term solution. We believe that in the time it takes to develop and test a new tag line/theme, the current supplies of *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* materials will be depleted, and NHTSA and the States will be able to better phase in a new communication platform.

If you have any further questions regarding the *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* theme, you may contact the Director of NHTSA's Office of Communications and Consumer Information, Susan Gorcowski, at 202/366-9294.

An identical letter has been sent to the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Appropriations; the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury and Independent Agencies; the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations; and the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury and General Government.

Sincerely yours,

Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D