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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEB SITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

ELLEN DONESKI, STAFF DIRECTOR
DAVID SCHWIETERT, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

October 29, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write to follow up on my March 31, 2014, letter urging you to act swiftly to fill the vacant Administrator position at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in light of the issues surrounding the recall of millions of vehicles manufactured by General Motors and the latest safety issues pertaining to defective airbags in close to 8 million vehicles from various manufacturers.

While I have not yet received a formal response to my previous letter, Secretary Foxx informed me in June following testimony before the Committee, that the White House Office of Presidential Personnel was working to find the appropriate candidate. In September, Senators Dean Heller and Claire McCaskill, leaders of the Senate Commerce Committee's Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, joined the call for you to fill the position quickly. Regrettably, this has not yet happened, and NHTSA has now been without a Senate-confirmed Administrator for more than 320 days.

Recent media reports indicate that the Department of Transportation is undertaking a comprehensive review of NHTSA to determine whether it is effectively meeting its mandate to reduce the number of deaths, injuries and economic losses resulting from motor vehicle crashes on the nation's roadways. I request that your Administration share the results of this inquiry with the Senate Commerce Committee and other congressional committees of jurisdiction and provide briefings on your progress. Nevertheless, it is imperative that the pending review not further delay filling the top vacant position at NHTSA.

We all want to ensure the safety of the American driving public. Nominating a qualified individual to serve as the Administrator at NHTSA is an important step towards meeting this goal. While the Deputy Administrator and career staff have carried on the work of the agency, the task of assessing NHTSA's shortcomings, communicating with Congress and the American public, and fully implementing any necessary improvements will be hampered without an official endorsement for this important safety position.

I therefore reiterate my request that you formally nominate a qualified individual to serve as the Administrator at NHTSA. In turn, I commit to work with Chairman Rockefeller and our colleagues on the Commerce Committee to review any such nominee in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Thune", with a stylized, cursive script.

JOHN THUNE
Ranking Member

cc: Chairman John D. Rockefeller IV