

**1. A primary seat belt law is needed in Utah to reverse a recent trend of increasing fatalities on our roads.**

*Supporting statements:*

- a. Utah had been experiencing a downward trend in fatalities on our roads for more than a decade, but this year, fatalities are climbing at an alarming rate.
  - b. Over the past five years, 1,177 people died on Utah's roads. Of all those people killed in car crashes (excluding motorcycles, bicyclists and pedestrians) MORE THAN HALF of them (52%) were not wearing a seat belt.
    - i. We know that a seat belt can't save your life 100 percent of the time, but research shows in the past five years, of those unbuckled fatalities, about half of them – 200 people – could have been saved if a seat belt had been used.
  - c. More people die from failure to use a seat belt than from any other contributing factor, such as drunk driving, distracted driving, speeding, etc.
  - d. Utah's seat belt use rate is 83 percent.<sup>i</sup> That means while only 17 of the population remains extremely vulnerable to the consequences of a car crash, this 17 percent is contributing to half of our fatalities.
    - i. Seat belt usage in urban counties (86 percent) is 12 percent higher than in rural areas (74 percent) among all motorists.
  - e. No one wants to lose a loved one on the road. That's why Zero Fatalities is our goal. No other number is acceptable.
- 2. A primary seat belt law would increase the safety of all passengers in a vehicle during the event of a crash.**

*Supporting statements:*

- a. Exposure to unbelted occupants increases the risk of injury or death to other occupants in the vehicle by 40 percent.<sup>ii</sup>
- b. In frontal crashes with an unbelted passenger sitting behind the driver, the unbelted rear seat passengers increase the risk of fatality among belted drivers by 137 percent compared with belted rear seat passengers.<sup>iii</sup>
- c. Wearing a seat belt helps the driver to stay in the driver seat and helps maintain control of the vehicle.
- d. Seat belts are the single most effective traffic safety device for preventing death and injury.<sup>iv</sup>

**3. A clear majority of Utahns are in favor of a primary seat belt law.**

*Supporting statements:*

- a. A recent phone survey indicates 66 percent of Utahns believe there should be a primary seat belt law.<sup>v</sup>
- b. Women in rural Utah are the highest supporters of a primary seat belt law, with 74 percent supportive. Support for a primary seat belt among urban women ranks slightly below that at 71 percent.<sup>vi</sup>

**4. A primary seat belt law would save money.**

*Supporting statements:*

- a. An estimated \$7 million were spent on inpatient and emergency department hospital charges for unbelted Utahns. Of those charges, \$6 million (86 percent) could have been saved if Utahns had been belted.<sup>vii</sup>
- b. Sixty-two percent of government insurance costs are spent on 20 percent of the population from unbuckled victims of crash related injuries.
- c. In our nation, those who are not directly involved in crashes pay for nearly three-quarters of all crash costs, primarily through insurance premiums, taxes and congestion-related costs such as travel delay, excess fuel consumption and increased environmental impacts. In 2010, these costs, borne by society rather than by crash victims, totaled over \$200 billion.<sup>viii</sup>

**5. A primary seat belt law has a greater effect on reducing deaths and nonfatal injuries vs. secondary law.**

*Supporting statements:*

- a. Research shows up to a 12 percent increase in seat belt usage vs. secondary seat belt laws.<sup>ix</sup>
- b. There are currently 413 primary traffic laws. A primary seat belt law would just be one more primary law.
- c. Switching from a secondary law to a primary law reduces passenger vehicle driver deaths by seven percent.<sup>x</sup>

**6. A safe transportation system is essential to Utah businesses and the economic vitality and quality of life of the State.**

*Supporting statements:*

- a. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of occupational fatalities in the U.S.
- b. The aftermath of a crash affects employers, employees and families in a multitude of ways. These burdens include:
  - o The cost of medical care
  - o Higher insurance premiums
  - o Economic hardships on families
  - o Lost productivity for employers and other employees not involved in the crash
- c. In 2012, Utah's Workers' Compensation Fund received 456 claims involving motor vehicle crashes. Of those, 114 claims involved lost time from work. The average cost of a lost time claim is \$31,915 over the life of the claim. Thus, these motor vehicle crashes involve a predicted total

expenditure of **\$3,638,310**. (This only represents those who file WCF claims)

- d. In addition to the financial strains resulting from car crashes, other factors such as physical pain, disability and emotional impacts can significantly decrease the quality of life for Utah employees.
- e. Employers are in a position to influence the behavior of Utahns for good; when employers educate employees about safe driving, a trickle-down effect takes place, spreading the message to family members and the community at large.
- f. Participants in a national study about workplace safety perceived that on average, for every dollar spent improving workplace safety, about \$4.41 would be returned.<sup>xi</sup>

## 7. We need your help

### *Supporting statements:*

- a. We anticipate the legislature will consider a primary seat belt law during the 2015 legislative session. We will support that effort to the greatest extent possible, but we are calling upon the business leaders of Utah to lend their support in favor of a primary seat belt law in order to save lives on Utah's roads.
- b. UDOT has free resources like driving policies and education materials available to help businesses improve traffic safety in Utah and among employees.

## References:

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- <sup>i</sup> Observational seat belt survey, Utah Highway Safety Office, 2014.
  - <sup>ii</sup> MacLennan, P.A.; McGwin, Jr., G.; Metzger, J.; Moran, S.G.; and Rue III, L.W. 2004. Risk of injury for occupants of motor vehicle collisions from unbelted occupants. *Injury Prevention* 10(6):363-7.
  - <sup>iii</sup> Bose, D.; Arregui-Dalmases, C.; Sanchez-Molina, D.; Velazquez-Ameijide, J.; and Crandall, j. 2013. Increased risk of driver fatality due to unrestrained rear-seat passengers in severe frontal crashes. *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 53:100-4.
  - <sup>iv</sup> National Safety Council
  - <sup>v</sup> UDOT, 2013
  - <sup>vi</sup> UDOT, 2013
  - <sup>vii</sup> Intermountain Injury Control Research Center.  
<http://www.utcodes.org/media/pdf/2001OccupantProtection.pdf>
  - <sup>viii</sup> <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/812013.pdf>
  - <sup>ix</sup> <http://www.nhtsa.gov/staticfiles/nti/pdf/811524.pdf>
  - <sup>x</sup> Farmer, C.M. and Williams, A.F. 2005. Effect on fatality risk of changing from secondary to primary seat belt enforcement. *Journal of Safety Research* 36(2):189-94.
  - <sup>xi</sup> [http://www.asse.org/practicespecialties/bosc/docs/F2\\_Huangetal\\_0409.pdf](http://www.asse.org/practicespecialties/bosc/docs/F2_Huangetal_0409.pdf)