



# NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

May 1, 2018

REF: Stop Underrides

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the National Sheriffs' Association and the Traffic Safety Committee, I write today to encourage action on and to endorse S. 2219 and HR 4622, the STOP Underrides Act of 2017. The Stop Underrides Act of 2017 was introduced by Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D- N.Y.) and Sen. Marco Rubio (R- Fla.) as well as Reps. Steve Cohen (D-Tenn.) and Mark DeSaulnier (D-Calif.). The Act addresses the issue of vehicle underride involving commercial vehicles. The purpose of this legislation is to reduce the number of preventable deaths and injuries sustained during these tragic events.

The NSA encourages your support of law enforcement agencies across the United States in their efforts to prevent and curtail civilian and first responder deaths, injuries, and property damage due to underride events and to encourage proper reporting of these events.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimates that in 2016, 1,475 Americans were killed in passenger vehicle collisions involving commercial vehicles. Of those deaths, 295 were the result of side-impact deaths; 238 were the result of rear impact deaths; 915 were the result of frontal collision deaths; and, 27 people died when their vehicles struck an unknown part of the commercial vehicle.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, approximately 4,000 people have been killed in [crashes involving underride](#) between 1994 and 2014. Of that number, approximately 1,530 were related to side underride crashes.

Underrides are the result of a "geometric mismatch" between the floor of a tractor trailer, and the hood of passenger and first responder vehicles. Although passenger vehicles -- including law enforcement vehicles and first responders -- are equipped with safety features such as crumple zones and airbags, in a truck underride crash those safety features are rendered ineffective. Due to the [geometric mismatch](#) between commercial vehicles and passenger vehicles and the lack of effective comprehensive underride protection on commercial vehicles, an underride crash can have devastating consequences for the occupants of passenger vehicles, including:

Deputy Sheriff Joseph Gilmore on New Year's Day:

<https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2018/01/02/nashville-davidson-county-deputy-joseph-gilmore-dies-crash-new-years-day-crash/995390001/>

Connecticut Trooper Kevin Miller on March 29:

<https://www.policeone.com/vehicle-incidents/articles/472938006-Details-emerge-in-crash-that-killed-Conn-trooper/>



## NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

Every year hundreds of fatalities occur after colliding with and consequently traveling underneath the commercial vehicle. According to NHTSA, 80-90% of commercial vehicle crashes result in a vehicle underride. Although demonstrably underreported, over 4,000 American lives have been lost during the previous 19 years since the last underride regulation was issued in 1998.

Please find at this web address an informative video from the IIHS explaining rear underride:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=gQytMRIJkgw>

However, these substandard designs can be retrofitted and adapted with the proper side guards and rear guards that will provide passenger vehicle protection. These pivotal changes are in the hands of Congress to enact solutions that are mandatory for compliant commercial vehicles. The STOP Underrides Act of 2017, in both the House and the Senate, is an important piece of legislation that works to correct this "geometric mismatch" to better protect roadway drivers and traffic safety.

The National Sheriffs' Association Traffic Safety Committee believes that this bill is vital to the efforts to prevent these crashes from occurring, first and foremost and also to lower roadway deaths, injuries, and property damage. We applaud the efforts of Senators Gillibrand and Rubio, as well as Congressman Cohen and DeSaulnier as they work to combat and improve safety on our nation's roadways.

This request is deeply personal to all of us and will protect our constituents on our roadways, protect our law enforcement officers and first responders, and lower deaths and injuries.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold Eavenson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Sheriff Harold Eavenson, Rockwall County, TX

President, National Sheriffs' Association

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Whetsel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Sheriff John Whetsel (Ret.), Oklahoma County, OK

Chair, Traffic Safety Committee