

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927

Minority (202) 225-3641

March 13, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman,
Committee on Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone:

We write to urge the Energy and Commerce Committee to take up bipartisan self-driving vehicle legislation. Last Congress this Committee worked across party lines to draft H.R. 3388, the Safely Ensuring Lives Future Deployment and Research in Vehicle Evolution Act (SELF DRIVE Act). The SELF DRIVE Act was an example of this Committee at its very best: working together, across the aisle, to develop legislation that will advance life saving technology. As a result of our deliberative, transparent, and bipartisan process, the Committee voted unanimously, 54 yeas and 0 nays, to report the SELF DRIVE Act to the House floor where it again passed unanimously. Unfortunately, the Senate failed to act on the bill.

We are at a critical moment in the development of self-driving technology. We have the opportunity to support life saving technology, create mobility benefits for many communities, and support U.S. jobs and innovation against growing foreign competition. We must continue this important work in the 116th Congress.

Real Potential to Save Lives. Each year more than 37,000 people die on our roadways. To put that figure into context, think about the Prudential Center in your home state where the New Jersey Devils play hockey or the Moda Center in Portland, Oregon where the Portland Trail Blazers play basketball. Each arena respectively holds approximately 18,000 and 20,000 people. The number of lives we lose each year on our roadways would fill either arena to capacity. This is unacceptable. We know self-driving technology can help drive those numbers down. Ninety-four percent of all traffic accidents are attributable to driver error, such as distracted driving, driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or driving while tired. Safely automating the driving process and reducing driver error will save lives.

Vast Mobility Benefits. Self-driving vehicles promise to improve freedom and mobility for people with disabilities, the elderly, and those without easy access to public transportation. Self-driving technology will be transformative for those who depend on friends or family to go to the grocery store, visit family, or even a doctor appointment. Self-driving vehicles have the power to restore independence and remove transportation barriers that exist for many Americans. We must continue to support the development and deployment of technology that increases self-reliance, improves productivity, and gives Americans the freedom to control their lives.

International Competitiveness. The United States is the global leader in innovation, but we cannot allow the development of self-driving technology in the United States to slow if we want to maintain our leadership position. According to KPMG's "2019 Autonomous Vehicles Readiness Index," the U.S. ranks third in technology and innovation and ninth in policy and legislation.¹ Notably, the U.S. fell from third to fourth in KPMG's assessment of autonomous vehicle readiness. We have outdated standards and unnecessary barriers, which are slowing the development and deployment of self-driving technology. Other countries are moving full speed ahead and are even doing so here in our own backyard. California has approved multiple Chinese companies to test their technology here in the U.S. For example, Baidu and Pony.ai have vehicles on California's roadways right now to test their technology, as do twelve other Chinese companies. In fact, almost twenty-five percent of all companies testing their self-driving technology in California are Chinese. A Russian company conducted their first test of self-driving vehicle technology outside of Russia here in the U.S. earlier this year. We cannot allow Chinese and Russian companies to outpace us in our own backyard. We received testimony from companies concerned with the uncertainty of different state laws and how those laws negatively affect the ability to test and develop this technology. As a result, companies will move their operations to where certainty exists, including overseas if necessary. We must update our federal regulatory framework and modernize our decades-old laws to remain the international leader of self-driving technology as companies move from testing to deployment.

The SELF DRIVE Act created clear rules of the road for the safe testing and deployment of self-driving vehicles in the U.S. and supported the U.S. as a global leader in this emerging space. The SELF DRIVE Act clarified both federal and state roles with respect to regulating self-driving cars using the Obama Administration's Federal Automated Vehicle Policy as a guide and codified the regulatory regime in place today for traditional motor vehicles, which will provide regulatory certainty for a developing industry and avoid a patchwork of 50 different state laws. The SELF DRIVE Act also created more transparency between the federal government and industry to ensure that testing and deployment is safe and the government has sound data for their decisions.

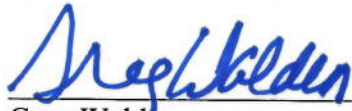
We urge the Committee to continue its bipartisan work on self-driving vehicle legislation. The Committee's work will save lives and improve mobility for Americans with disabilities, the elderly, and those underserved by traditional transportation. In addition, the legislation will support American jobs and leadership on self-drive technology.

¹ KPMG International, "2019 Autonomous Vehicles Readiness Index" (March 2019), available at <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/xx/pdf/2019/02/2019-autonomous-vehicles-readiness-index.pdf>

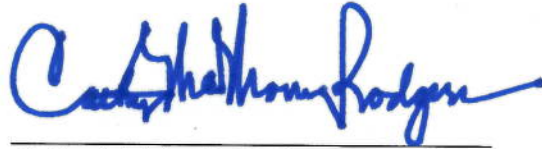
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Page 3

Thank you for your attention, and we look forward to continuing the Committee's bipartisan work on self-drive technology.

Sincerely,



Greg Walden
Republican Leader



Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection
and Commerce



Robert Latta
Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Communications
and Technology