

**Statement of Julie Peck
Mother of Jackson Peck
Killed In a Backover Incident
July 21, 2005**

Good morning. My name is Julie Peck. I flew here today from Marietta, Georgia, with my husband, Smith, to ask Congress to support all of the life-saving auto safety provisions in the highway bill to protect families like mine.

As Congress prepares to vote on the bill, I would like for lawmakers to know about the tragedy that struck my family last Christmas so that other families might never face the same. On December 23, 2004, my 4-year old son Jackson was killed when his grandmother ran over him while backing up her car. They were on their way to go Christmas caroling when Jackson jumped out of the car to be with his older cousins. It happened in a blink of an eye. It was dark, his grandmother couldn't see when she put the car in reverse and now our family bears two heavy burdens. This kind of tragedy is a double-edged sword as we deal with death and guilt. In these types of accidents, it is normally a family member who runs over a child.

It could have been avoided. If there had been a back-up sensor, a beeper or even a camera on the vehicle to warn the driver, his grandmother could have stopped in time. Too many of these kinds of tragedies have occurred to be called a "freak" accident. Advocacy groups like Kids And Cars are now tracking two accidents like this per week. No government agency is tracking deaths like these that occur off public property. The children are almost always under the age of 5. They are so small and so fast.

My husband and I aren't blaming anyone. But, just as shotguns need a lock on them around children, this vehicle safety deficiency needs to be addressed by Congress. We need a device to help us see behind our cars when backing up and pulling out. Currently, there are not visibility standards for vehicles in these situations. We need to be educated about the dangers on the outside of the car. We know about seatbelts, car seats and air bags, but we haven't faced this danger as automakers continue to make larger vehicles.

Jackson was a wonderful boy. We honor him by coming to Washington. We urge Congress to pay attention to these accidents and to hear our plea. Thank you.

Contact: Julie and Smith Peck
Marietta, Georgia
(c) 404-518-7419
juliempeck@yahoo.com