***2017******Click It or Ticket***

**SAMPLE OP-ED**

Note: *Before filling in the names of the organization and organization spokesperson, you MUST contact them to obtain their permission to use their names in this press release, and you must get their approval for the language used in their quotes, and any changes or additions they may require. Only after this is done can you send out the op-ed.*

***Click It or Ticket:* Make Seat Belt Use a Daily Habit**

**By (Local Leader)**

Brush teeth, eat breakfast, tie shoes—these are automatic actions taken by millions of Americans every day, often out of habit. Buckling your seat belt should be such an automatic action. In fact, seat belt use should be the automatic next step after sitting down in a vehicle. Whether you ride in the front seat or the back, and no matter which car seat or booster seat your child may use, everyone’s seat belt should be buckled every trip. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s 2015 research, 9,874 people were killed by neglecting this one simple task. Locally, **[number of local deaths]** unbelted community members died. The action is so quick and so basic—and it can save your life.

From May 22 to June 4, **[local law enforcement agency]** is joining NHTSA and law enforcement agencies nationwide for the 2017 *Click It or Ticket* enforcement mobilization. We will be out in full force, cracking down on seat belt violations and issuing citations to anyone caught traveling without a buckled seat belt or transporting unrestrained children. We are working with law enforcement to spread the message that seat belts save lives. In fact, from 2011 to 2015, they saved nearly 64,000 lives. In 2015, an additional 2,804 lives could have been saved if all unrestrained occupants involved in fatal crashes had worn their seat belts.

Why the month of May? Memorial Day weekend kicks off the busy summer season, with many more families on the roads. We have found this to be the most effective time to remind drivers why seat belt laws matter—they help save lives. This is not a campaign to write tickets or train law enforcement. This is a campaign to help keep people safe and alive. We see the causalities of not wearing a seat belt, and we do not wish that devastation on anyone.

In addition to increased patrols and zero-tolerance enforcement, we really want to get the right information out to motorists. There are too many false notions out there about seat belts:

* YOUTH - Young adults in particular seem to think they are invincible in vehicles. Unfortunately, they are dying at a disproportionate rate because they are not wearing their seat belts.
* MALES - Almost twice as many men are dying in vehicle crashes compared to women, and wearing their seat belts less than women.
* PICKUP TRUCK DRIVERS AND PASSENGERS - Pickup truck occupants think that they don’t need to wear their seat belts because they believe their large vehicles will protect them in a crash. However, the numbers from NHTSA tell the truth: 60 percent of pickup truck occupants who were killed in crashes were not buckled up. That’s compared to 42 percent of passenger car occupants who were unbuckled when they were killed in crashes.

Nighttime also poses a particularly dangerous threat to vehicle occupants, which is why an important part of our safety message to motorists includes the words “day and night.” In 2015, about 57 percent of passenger vehicle occupants who were killed during the nighttime hours of 6 p.m. to 5:59 a.m. were not wearing their seat belts. More people are being killed in nighttime crashes than ever before, and we are going to be targeting nighttime seat belt violators as a result.

Remember: The habit of buckling up is as simple as turning on a light switch. It should be an automatic action for you, and for everyone in your vehicle. Do not just buckle up to avoid a ticket—our friends’ and families’ lives in **[local area]** are more important than that. But if you are caught driving while unbuckled, you will get a ticket—no excuses, no warnings. Wearing your seat belt is required by law. Day and night, front seat and back, *Click It or Ticket*.

You can find out more about the *Click It or Ticket* mobilization at [www.nhtsa.gov/ciot](http://www.nhtsa.gov/ciot).

12879b-020617-v2