**2016 DROWSY DRIVING CAMPAIGN**

**SAMPLE OPINION EDITORIAL**

**SOCIAL NORMING**

**Drowsy Driving Can Be Deadly:**

***Take a Break. Drive Awake.***

By **[State/Local Leader]**

It has probably happened to you. You are driving on a long trip, traveling alone or at night, or perhaps just off from a long shift at work—and you start to yawn. Your eyes are heavy, the road seems to go on forever, and your vehicle veers. You have just entered a danger zone.

Drowsy driving is estimated to contribute to as many as 1.2 million collisions, resulting in potentially 5,000 to 8,000 fatalities per year. But despite these risks, experts agree that drowsy driving is far too prevalent.

Research shows that nearly a third of drivers admitted to driving within the prior thirty days when they were so tired that they had trouble keeping their eyes open. This lack of sleep slows reaction time, impairs judgment, and increases the risk of dozing off while driving.

That’s why **[State/Local Organization]** is teaming up with the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to remind all drivers to always be well rested before they get behind the wheel.

Getting good sleep on a regular basis is the best defense against drowsy driving. But if you do find yourself driving while drowsy, *Take a Break. Drive Awake –* to help reduce the risks of drowsy driving.

Every driver should know the warning signs and how to avoid drowsy driving. Having trouble keeping your head up, nodding off, veering into another lane or onto the rumble strip, and frequent yawning -- are all signals that you are too drowsy to drive safely.

Sleep is the best remedy. Rolling down the windows, turning up the radio or drinking a caffeinated beverage are not enough to stave off drowsiness.

If you are drowsy while behind the wheel, find a safe, legal place off the roadway to take a quick nap. Or take a break to recharge with exercise. Physical activity such as a brisk walk or moving around offers a natural boost of energy.

On long trips, schedule breaks every two hours or 100 miles to stretch and move around. And try not to drive alone on long-trips. A driver accompanied by a passenger is nearly 50 percent less likely to be involved in a drowsy-driving related crash.

Always aim for seven or more hours of sleep every night to ensure you are ready to get behind the wheel. Drivers who sleep less than five hours per night are six times more likely to be involved in a drowsy-driving-related crash than drivers who get eight or more hours of sleep.

Take the simple step to protect yourself and others by always being well rested before you get behind the wheel.

Never risk driving when you are drowsy. But if you do find yourself drowsy while driving -- remember: *Take a Break. Drive Awake.* It may just save your life or someone else’s.

For more information visit: [www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov](http://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov).