

Statement of Ted Leonard
Executive Director
Pennsylvania AAA Federation
To the Senate Transportation Committee
January 27, 2016

Good Afternoon Chairmen and members of the Senate Transportation Committee.

My name is Ted Leonard. I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania AAA Federation which is the state association of the AAA clubs in Pennsylvania, encompassing over 3.1 million member-motorists. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issue of snow and ice removal from vehicles.

Virtually every state that experiences snow has some sort of a law regulating the removal of snow and ice from a windshield or other parts of the car before driving. These laws primarily seek to prevent motorists from driving a vehicle with an obstruction – be that on their windshield, over their headlights, or over side view mirrors. However, this doesn't prevent snow and ice on top of the vehicle from flying off while driving. Pennsylvania has an existing law, which SB 93 and SB 94 seek to amend, that provides for penalties to be charged to a motorist who failed to clear the top of their vehicle, but only if doing so caused an injury to another motorist. Only New Jersey and Connecticut have a similar snow removal law. In other states, violators could be penalized with reckless driving or failure to secure a load. In most states, causing any injury or property damage opens the possibility of a reckless driving charge.

Although there are a disproportionate number of crashes this time of year involving bad weather and winter storms, safety statistics in the area of the role of snow in crashes are difficult as NHTSA does not differentiate crashes specifically involving snow falling from vehicles from other crashes involving snow such as icy road conditions, windshield visibility, etc.

AAA offers driving tips specifically for driving in snow and ice, including whenever possible, avoid driving in poor weather conditions, making sure your vehicle is mechanically sound and clearing all snow and ice from the vehicle. In addition to cautioning for reduced speed and turning on headlights, we recommend motorists increase following distances from the normal three to four seconds on dry pavement to eight to ten seconds when driving on icy, slippery surfaces. This increased margin of safety will not only provide you the longer distance needed if

you have to stop but also additional space and time to avoid anything flying off the vehicle in front of you or if you need to make an emergency lane change.

Regarding the proposed bills, we have some concern with the standard of “all reasonable efforts,” what constitutes “all reasonable efforts,” and if the lack of reasonable efforts is provable in a court. We do support the proactive approach of giving law enforcement the authority to stop a vehicle the officer believes that accumulated ice or snow on the vehicle poses a hazard.

In the end it is incumbent upon each us in the motoring public to ensure our vehicles are not only safe for our own driving but for others on the road as well.