

NEWS RELEASE

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Bureaucrats refuse to budge on air bags as children become 'crash test dummies'

Allowing disconnection would save lives, Libertarians say

WASHINGTON, DC —The Libertarian Party has three words of advice for federal air bag regulators: Save the children.

Government-mandated air bags have killed 10 children since October, most of them infants — yet federal regulators are refusing to let terrified parents disconnect them.

"The government has made it illegal for parents to save the lives of their children," said Steve Dasbach, Libertarian Party chairman. "Under federal law, car dealers and mechanics can be prosecuted for disconnecting these deadly safety devices."

Automotive air bags have killed 38 children and 23 adults in low-speed crashes since 1990, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. As the death toll rises, the agency is being pressured to allow lower-powered air bags in new cars and to permit consumers to disconnect existing ones. The NHTSA is expected to announce new regulations next week.

"The NHTSA's director, Ricardo Martinez, has admitted that 500 worried motorists a day have been calling the agency and pleading for permission to disconnect air bags," Dasbach said.

The response?

"Bureaucrats are ordering them to write a letter to Washington, DC, and ask for a waiver," said Dasbach. "Panicked parents are being forced to plead for permission to save their children's lives. Sadly, their children may not be able to wait that long."

Dasbach acknowledged that, overall, air bags have probably saved thousands of lives. "That's exactly why car makers would offer them as options and why most consumers would buy them without a government mandate," he said. "But by depriving parents of the freedom to choose, politicians have seized control over a life-and-death decision that parents should make."

He also acknowledged that the auto industry, fearing legal action, is now resisting proposals to allow the disconnection of air bags. "When politicians first mandated air bags, they did so despite objections from carmakers. So why should they listen to the industry now?"

Instead, bureaucrats should return to America's parents the power to decide on proper safety policies for America's children, he said.

"It's time for politicians to stop treating our children like crash test dummies," Dasbach said. "It shouldn't be a crime to try to save the life of your child."

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