

## ASIRT Partners with Congressional Caucus on Global Road Safety for Briefing on the Hill

A June 4 briefing titled ***Protecting Overseas Employees and Travelers: Organizational Responsibility for Road Safety*** was organized by ASIRT and sponsored by the U.S. Congressional Caucus on Global Road Safety Co-Chairs **Rep. Richard Hudson** (R-NC) and **Rep. Steve Cohen** (D-TN). A panel of invited representatives from the government, international, corporate, and education sectors addressed how road safety information is provided to employees and travelers in advance of travel abroad. The purpose of the briefing was to raise Congressional awareness of the impact of road crashes on American citizens working, living, and traveling abroad through a discussion of the responsibility of the organizations that send employees, volunteers, and visitors overseas.

**Ambassador Marc Grossman**, Vice Chairman at The Cohen Group and former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, moderated the event. At the conclusion of the briefing Ambassador Grossman summarized the main issues and challenges raised during the briefing: 1) data is key; 2) the need to find ways to ensure the public sees road safety information and data to stay informed; 3) the shared responsibility between states, corporations, governments, and MDBs (Multilateral Development Banks) and NGOs to be part of the solution and educate the public; 4) many road-related crashes are preventable, and there are solutions we should implement to address this important issue.



*Rochelle Sobel and Ambassador Marc Grossman with briefing panelists.*



*Amb. Marc Grossman addresses briefing attendees.*



*Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC) opens the briefing and discusses the current road safety crisis.*

Congressional Global Road Safety Caucus Co-Chair **Rep. Richard Hudson** (R-NC) opened the briefing and expressed gratitude to ASIRT founder and President **Rochelle Sobel** for organizing the briefing. Hudson highlighted the significant public health challenges posed by road safety, which he termed “preventable.” He discussed how former **Congressman Alcee Hastings** brought him into the Caucus. Hudson relaunched the Caucus to raise awareness and improve road travel safety in a bipartisan way.



*Sen. Norm Coleman answers questions from attendees.*

**Senator Norm Coleman** also stressed the importance of ASIRT, road safety, and bipartisan and bicameral work. He urged staffers in attendance to return to their offices and seek sound solutions to these pressing issues.

During introductory remarks, **Rochelle Sobel** shared how the personal tragedy of losing her 25-year-old son, Aron Sobel, in a bus crash in Turkey led her to found ASIRT and the importance of ASIRT's work.

Attendees listened intently to and engaged with the panel of experts from different sectors who provided information about their organizations, road safety challenges, and progress and recommendations for improving road safety. Presentations included:

- **Thomas Yazdgerdi**, President of the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA), presented survey results indicating a high incidence of severe and fatal injuries from auto, pedestrian, and bicycle crashes, particularly in developing countries, with significant cases in South Africa and Latin America. He outlined upcoming steps, including a partnership between the Foreign Service Institute and ASIRT to prepare diplomats for road safety abroad.
- **Elizabeth Gracon**, Managing Director of Overseas Citizen Services at the U.S. Department of State, reviewed how road safety and travel advisories are presented on the agency's website. Gracon stressed that the largest challenge they face is getting travelers to read and act on this information. She also warned that navigation apps do not always route travelers through safe areas. Their role is simply to assist travelers to reach their destinations. Gracon then highlighted an example of the State Department's work with Waze, Google, and local hotels to reroute travelers in South Africa to avoid dangerous areas where some travelers were being robbed and even killed.
- **Amelia Dietrich**, Senior Director for Research and Publications at the Forum on Education Abroad, discussed the organization's role in setting best practices and standards to minimize road safety risks for students abroad. The Forum publishes the Standards for Good Practice for Education Abroad and will continue to measure student risk by tracking incidents and the level of disruption in education programs.
- **Dr. Jasminka Goldoni Laestadius**, Senior Occupational Health Specialist in the Health and Safety Directorate of the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund, shared how the World Bank prepares employees for road safety challenges through education and monitoring crash data.
- **Natalie Draisin**, North American Director at the FIA Foundation spoke about the need for good data to develop effective road safety solutions to reduce the "pandemic on wheels." She emphasized that the private sector can and should play a larger role to prioritize safety. Draisin highlighted the importance of the FIA Safety Index, recognizing its impact on tracking road safety and data, and using it to measure performance and create road safety metrics.

ASIRT is most appreciative for the participation of the panelists and looks forward to collaborating with them to explore and implement solutions to address the road safety crisis that affects American citizens who work, live, study, serve, and travel abroad.



*Panelist Dr. Jasminka Goldoni Laestadius and Rochelle Sobel*



*Panelists Elizabeth Gracon (left) and Amelia Dietrich*



*Panelist Thomas Yazdgerdi*



*Panelists Dr. Jasminka Goldoni Laestadius (left) and Natalie Draisin*

