

Poconos. In addition, he started the influential House Bipartisan Anti-Gambling Coalition.

As chairman and leading Democrat on the House Transportation Committee, he worked to ensure the safety of all Pennsylvanians, writing a law that regulates the transportation of solid waste, with a ban on "back hauling" of garbage in trucks that transport food, and the teen driver licensing law that provides for increased instruction for young drivers.

Working for Monroe County, Joe initiated the Route 209 project that is now beginning final design and right-of-way acquisition, obtained funding for all traffic control devices on Route 611 from Stroud Township to Mount Pocono for 15 years, and personally pushed PennDOT to have a church at the intersection of Shafer Schoolhouse Road and Business Route 209 moved and preserved to correct the dangerous intersection.

And from his post on the Education Committee, he initiated School Performance Grants to reward schools that improve in areas such as the graduation rate and percentage of students who go on to higher education. He also helped to develop charter schools and the Early Intervention Education Program.

Mr. Speaker, Joe Battisto was a devoted and enthusiastic legislator. He cared deeply about the impact that the actions of state government have on the lives of ordinary people, and he carefully studied every issue. I could always count on Joe to give me a thoughtful analysis of any issue affecting the people of Monroe County, and I knew that their interests were always uppermost in his mind.

Unlike some politicians who try to justify their positions with one-sided spin, Joe Battisto took the time to explain the pros and cons of every issue to demonstrate his reasoning. Students and senior citizens alike left a discussion with Joe Battisto with a deeper appreciation for the complexity of state issues.

Joe and his wife, Virginia, have four children and five grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to call to the attention of the House of Representatives the long history of Joe Battisto's service to the people of Monroe County and all of Pennsylvania, and I join his friends and neighbors in wishing him and his wife all the best.

TRIBUTE TO CHIEF OF POLICE
STEPHEN W. OTT

HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFFEL

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 4, 2001

Mr. HOFFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Chief of Police Stephen W. Ott upon his retirement after forty-eight years of service with the Cheltenham Township Police Department of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. His long and dedicated service to the citizens of Cheltenham Township has served as an example to all.

Chief Ott was appointed to the Cheltenham Township Police Department on May 11, 1953 and is the longest serving police officer in the history of the Township. He began as a patrol officer and then was quickly promoted to Sergeant. He was promoted to Lieutenant and later was named Chief of Police on February 29, 1980. His tenure as Chief lasted twenty-one years. He has been awarded the Bravery

Commendation, which is the department's second highest official commendation that can be awarded.

During his distinguished career, Chief Ott guided the police department as it became the third largest municipal law enforcement agency in Montgomery County. He has been instrumental in adding many special operations units such as the Canine, Highway Safety, Community Relations and Crime Prevention.

Although Chief Ott's tenure began before the information technology age, he embraced technology by adding computers to the Investigative Division, police department operations and record keeping and dispatching. The structure of the department was also overhauled due to Chief Ott's foresight.

It is a privilege to honor the contributions of Chief Stephen W. Ott to the citizens of Cheltenham Township. Chief Ott has my sincere best wishes for a long and happy retirement.

THE NATIONAL AMUSEMENT PARK
RIDE SAFETY ACT

HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, April 4, 2001

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the National Amusement Park Ride Safety Act, to restore safety oversight to an largely unregulated industry. I am joined in this effort by Representatives CONNIE MORELLA, JOHN TIERNEY, CAROLYN MALONEY, BARNEY FRANK, PETER DEFAZIO, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, CYNTHIA MCKINNEY, TOM LANTOS, and JULIA CARSON.

It is shocking to realize that one-third of all roller coasters in this country are never inspected by any public safety official at all. These and other rides are large machines used to carry children at high speeds. Industry trends have been to increase the speed and the force of these machines to levels that exceed the forces experienced by shuttle astronauts. Although many of these rides are operated safely and without incident, nevertheless every day riders are hurt, often seriously, requiring hospitalization, visits to emergency rooms. And occasionally, someone who went to the park for a thrill actually is killed by the operation of these machines.

To me, it is inexcusable that when someone dies or is seriously injured on these rides, there is no system in place to ensure that the ride is investigated, the causes determined, and the flaws fixed, not just on that ride, but on every similar ride in every other state.

The reason there is no national clearinghouse to prevent ride injuries is clear—since 1981, the industry has escaped routine product safety regulation through a loophole in the law. The industry carved out an exemption that says that while the Consumer Product Safety Commission can regulate every other consumer product, and while it can regulate small carnival rides that travel from town to town, it cannot step foot in an amusement park for the purpose of regulating a ride that is fixed to the site, such as a roller coaster.

This is the so-called "Roller Coaster Loop-hole", and it needs to be closed. The bill eliminates the restriction on CPSC safety jurisdiction adopted in 1981. It will allow the CPSC the same scope of authority to protect against

unreasonable risks of harm on "fixed-site" rides that it currently retains for carnival rides that are moved from site to site ("mobile rides.") This would include the authority to investigate accidents, to develop and enforce action plans to correct defects, to require reports to the CPSC whenever a substantial hazard is identified, and to act as a national clearinghouse for accident and defect data.

The bill would also authorize appropriations of \$500 thousand annually to enable the CPSC to carry out the purposes of the Act.

BACKGROUND

The Consumer Product Safety Act provided the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) with the same consumer protections authority it has for other consumer products. However, in 1981, following a series of legal challenges by several owners of large theme parks, Congress stepped in and limited CPSC authority only to those rides "not permanently fixed to a site." Thus, the CPSC currently is prohibited from investigating accidents or developing or enforcing safety plans, and manufacturers, owners and operators of rides are not required to disclose to the CPSC defects which would create a substantial hazard of consumer injury. Since it cannot gather the information, the CPSC is also effectively prevented from sharing the information with others so that accidents in one state can be prevented in another.

RISE IN RISK OF SERIOUS INJURY

The CPSC estimates the number of serious injuries on fixed and mobile amusement park rides using the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System (NEISS). This data includes only injuries severe enough to have led the injured party to go to an emergency room. According to its July 2000 summary, emergency-room injuries on fixed rides increased 95 percent over the previous four years, and they rose most rapidly on the rides that are exempt from CPSC oversight.

When one compares the safety record of this industry to other activities that involve traveling—as a passenger at high speed, such as passenger trains, buses and planes, the amusement park industry's fatality rate is actually worse.

Some states try to step in where the CPSC cannot, but states with inspection programs are very uneven depending on which agency has the responsibility and whether its expertise is design, operator training, manufacturing, etc. No state, and no industry organization, provides the national clearinghouse function that the CPSC currently provides for mobile rides and could provide for fixed-site rides.

FATALITIES

Although the overall risk of death on an amusement park ride is very small, it is not zero. In the course of one week in August 1999, for example, 4 deaths occurred on roller coasters, which U.S. News & World Report termed "one of the most calamitous weeks in the history of America's amusement parks":

August 22—a 12-year-old boy fell to his death after slipping through a harness on the Drop Zone ride at Paramount's Great America Theme Park in Santa Clara, California;

August 23—a 20-year-old man died on the Shockwave roller coaster at Paramount King's Dominion theme park near Richmond, Virginia;

August 28—a 39-year-old woman and her 8-year-old daughter were killed when their