

**Chris Spear – ATA MCE Keynote Address**

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*As prepared for delivery*

Thank you! Welcome to San Diego, home of the 2019 Management Conference and Exhibition.

The ATA team and I are honored to host you this week.

And while the sun, networking and entertainment are reason enough to attend this year's event, your presence here suggests there's more behind why MC&E has become the trucking industry's premier venue.

You're here because you care deeply about this industry, allowing our collective goals to shape and drive our industry's future. We are in this together.

Whether your passion is for safety, infrastructure, trade, technology, developing our workforce or our industry's image... the ATA is committed to your priorities and upholding our shared vision for the future. We ARE in this together.

We're now looking well beyond the hood... and together, shaping an industry that puts our employees, the motoring public, our customers' needs and our nation, first.

Our economy is tethered to trucking.

The security of this country relies on trucks and the people who drive them. The American way of life is reflected in our shared values... And such reflection is indicative of an industry that moves America forward.

From it, we know that our growth depends on our understanding of the environment in which we live and work, and our unyielding ability to navigate it with certainty and precision. Truckers know what it means to take the road less traveled.

On the road... it's unforgiving.

And in today's environment, changing public policy is no different.

It's challenging and complex, requiring patience... and sheer determination. You have to find that extra gear if a difference is to be made... something the inexperienced will never grasp.

For 86 years, the ATA has reigned as the true, unified voice of the trucking industry, serving 50 state associations and a vast array of members, including carriers and their several million drivers, technicians and valued employees; truck and trailer manufacturers; shippers; suppliers, including technology innovators and software companies; public and private truck driving schools; employee health and wellness; law firms; as well as insurers, just to name a few.

In fact, ATA has a presence in every state and Congressional district in the country, and is now closely affiliated with national trucking associations throughout the world. Several have joined us here today.

The U.S. trucking industry now spends more than \$10 billion each year on safety... including technology, training and compliance -- all part of a concerted effort to save lives, not our bottom line. This, despite the fact that two-thirds of the accidents involving trucks are caused by passenger vehicles.

Trucking employment now exceeds 7.8 million people. That's 1 in 16 jobs in the United States, where a truck driver remains the top job in 29 states. Trucks move more than 71 percent of the domestic freight and the people who drive, service, load and unload them are to be commended.

They are husbands and wives, moms and dads, Democrats and Republicans, people of all races and backgrounds... They include veterans, and people with disabilities... They are people deeply committed to their local communities. They coach little league, they are scout leaders, mentors, spiritual leaders and are so generous with their time and resources – raising incredible amounts of money for important causes like cancer treatment for children.

And like our men and women in uniform, they are among the most patriotic and hard-working people in America... the first to help those impacted by floods, fires, tornadoes and hurricanes by delivering food, water, medicine, fuel and hope – often the first to respond on the scene of an accident, stopping to help save complete strangers.

This is today's trucking industry... this is an American story... this is our story... and thanks to you, these are the millions of people ATA is proud to represent. We are in this TOGETHER.

Last year, we introduced the first annual Trucking Cares Foundation Premiere Achievement Award. This award is voted on by the Foundation's Board to honor people who positively impact the lives of others. Last year, Herschel Evans, a professional truck driver with Holland, was our recipient... and he's since continued to raise money for kids with cancer.

This year... we would like to recognize a trucking industry leader who has been giving back his entire career.

Mike Ducker has spent countless years giving to others, in communities throughout the world. He has served as our Treasurer and has helped guide the direction of ATA for the past three years. Mike has served on the boards of ATRI and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. His top priorities have been faith, family and FedEx. Family includes not only his wife Cheryl and daughter Rachel, but also the entire trucking family, including a driver named Chad Schrak.

Chad had lost a friend – a veteran – to suicide, and his wife had been diagnosed with colon cancer. He decided to walk across the United States to raise awareness of both causes. Thinking Chad may need a little boost – Mike and John Smith traveled to Enid, Oklahoma. Unannounced, they pulled up alongside Chad... just to cheer him on. They made sure Chad had plenty of food and warm clothing, and spent the evening with him learning about his journey – walking alongside him in their hearts as Chad told of his experience and its impact. Talk about showing up for one another. This was a life changing moment for Chad and a gesture he will forever remember.

Mike is passionate about the Salvation Army, serving on its Board of Directors. Their mission is well-aligned with Trucking Cares Foundation priorities – including humanitarian and disaster relief, eradicating human trafficking and strengthening trucking's relations with the military and veterans. Mike's service, his deep generosity, humor and good nature have made a difference in many people's lives. Mike is loved by many, and every single one of us thinks we are important to him – he makes us feel that way. We all know Mike will continue to do even more during his retirement.

So on behalf of the TCF board, it is my honor to announce Mike Ducker as the second recipient of the annual Trucking Cares Foundation Premier Achievement Award, which includes a TCF donation of \$5,000 to the Salvation Army. Mike, will you please join me on stage?

At ATA, our success begins and ends entirely with you, our members. We are in this together. Our policies, our priorities and our strategies are all driven by facts, not rhetoric; action, not blame; results, not emotion.

When there is a major question before us, we first turn to you.

Your view matters to us... and your inclusion in the development of all ATA policies ensures that we preserve our diverse, member-driven promise.

Chasing false prophecies engineered entirely for self-serving, short-term gains is exclusive... and harmful to our industry's future sustainable growth.

At ATA, we are all about helping well-run businesses succeed by leading common-sense, data-driven initiatives. And as our members, this is what you expect and deserve from a national association.

We're not a "just-in-time" association. We make plans. We follow through. And we have a full inventory of talent dedicated to winning.

Your guidance and leadership have served ATA and this industry well. And my team, our state executives and I are all stronger, more confident and strategic because of you.

This is my view of our future.

And then there's the opinions of others.

At ATA, we tend to take notice of what key decision-makers have to say about our association and what it means to them and the country when shaping policy and agendas.

Take for instance the President and Vice President of the United States and the countless times ATA has been to the White House, sharing your policies and supporting an agenda that grows our industry.

The same can be said for the many federal departments and agencies that ATA and its members have worked hand-in-glove to build the very transportation policies and programs that govern our nation.

And if you listen closely, you'll hear your voice through the countless hearings ATA members and staff have testified before Senate committees... including, most recently, the Senate Finance Committee on the critical importance of trade and trucking.

Some might say that, "ATA has gotten cozy with President Trump, his Administration and the Senate Republican majority..."

Well, judging by all the media attention ATA's generated these last three years, I can understand why some might suggest that... and believe me, they have.

But if that were true... then why was ATA invited by Speaker Pelosi to present at the new House majority retreat earlier this year? I had to dig deep on this one... and confirmed that this was the first time ATA had ever been invited to this closed-door venue.

And once there, I was repeatedly reminded by House Democrat leaders that I was the only Republican in the room, and that ATA was the only invitee to represent a business interest.

This dependence on ATA to get major issues across the finish line is evident... Take for instance our testifying this year before House Democrat Chairman Neal's Ways and Means Committee on infrastructure funding -- alongside the US Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO.

Rest assured, the list of groups wanting a coveted witness slot at that hearing was quite long.

Or before House Democrat Chairman DeFazio's Transportation & Infrastructure Committee on all things trucking, making sure that your policies and reasoning were front and center and in no way compromised or distorted by competing, jaded agendas.

We even put our own members before Chairman DeFazio's committee, testifying on infrastructure; and, again just last month on the mounting burden tolls place on our industry.

The fact is, the relationships ATA has with the House and Senate -- and both governing parties -- are real, strategic and impactful. We don't favor either side over the other and our Truck PAC support confirms it.

The right wing and left wing belong to the same bird. And as an association that puts its members, industry and country first, we must always adhere to the value of working with anyone willing to work with us. We do that... and we soar.

ATA's new strategic plan, named 1-3-5, has improved command and control over our structure, staff and process. How we add and develop the best talent, grow our budget, and communicate with the world is now in full motion.

This same planning is giving ATA the direction it needs to make informed recommendations on the future location of ATA's headquarters.

These decisions and changes are all coming within the next five years, and with your clear direction and support, ATA's success will only continue.

Since becoming your President and CEO, ATA's focus on your priorities has been relentless, posting key wins... from federal tax reform to the preemption of California's duplicative meal and rest break requirements.

These results contribute to a growth environment. And 2018 was, without question, one of the

best performing years in the history of the U.S. trucking industry.

But what we need to focus on here this morning isn't what we've done... but what we're doing now to shape the future. Coming into this year's MC&E, our committees are well prepared to advance comments and positions on the pending Hours of Service rulemaking... as well as legislation on speed limiters, side underrides and CSA.

Several of these issues are unfolding as I speak and your participation this week will undoubtedly help ATA steer the outcomes.

ATRI now reports that our industry is losing \$74.5 billion a year sitting in traffic, despite commercial vehicles being just 4 percent of the vehicles on the road. That equates to 425,000 truck drivers sitting idle for an entire year and emitting a staggering 67 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>.

Congestion doesn't care if you're a capitalist or environmentalist... you still sit, while life's precious moments pass by. We felt so strongly about this that for the first time, ATA created its own national ad campaign entitled, Life Won't Wait.

Not only was this ad praised by pro-infrastructure advocates, including the Speaker of the House, it was feared by the very legislators that talk a good game, while doing nothing to shore up our nation's ailing Highway Trust Fund.

Perhaps most impressive, however, was the number of groups that joined you, our state associations and ATA by answering the call and providing immediate funding for this initiative, including the US Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Building Trades Unions.

Few times have I witnessed business and labor coming together for the common good of America... this was one of them, and ATA made it happen.

Getting a well-funded infrastructure bill passed takes resolve. To succeed, we have to call out anyone who thinks fake funding, like tolling existing roads and bridges, is in our nation's best interests.

Unlike them, we actually have a plan. ATA, the business community and labor unions are putting real money on the table. A modest increase in the fuel tax -- a nickel a year over four years -- would generate \$340 billion in new revenue over 10 years, and cost less than a penny per gallon to administer.

That's what ATA's Build America Fund would do.

It's the most conservative, efficient and equitable solution, and the most difficult to evade. It's immediate. And it's time for Congress to do the job we hired them to do... vote. And I am absolutely convinced the votes are there to fund America's infrastructure.

And for those in Congress unwilling to get the job done, we need to help facilitate their immediate retirement.

It's been said that trade and trucking are synonymous. Even in this politically polluted environment, one would think free and fair trade would appeal to all sides.

And in the case of improving the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement, where labor and environmental standards were woefully inadequate, an upgrade is a no brainer. But even the simplest things can be the hardest.

That's where truckers come in. We've been working with this Administration, House and Senate, and our Mexican and Canadian counterparts to highlight the overwhelming benefits, as well as the alarming economic impact that would ensue if the pending US, Mexico, Canada Agreement is not passed by Congress. And that work is paying off.

Just saying "no" gets you nothing. Helping all sides get to yes is what we're all about, and why this agreement will pass and soon bring economic stability to our industry for years to come. We are in this together.

That takes us to building a well-trained talent pool... capable of replacing our rapidly aging workforce over the coming decade.

We've heard the numbers, the latest showing a current shortage of 60,000 drivers. Let me be clear, poaching talent from other carriers is NOT a sustainable growth strategy.

Denying the shortage even exists only empowers other modes to chip away at our current market share... and they will. Ignoring the facts is not an option. The problem is real. And the solution is not one thing... but many, starting with our current stable of drivers.

We need to focus on improving access to affordable health care and wellness programs that keep our employees healthy and improves their overall quality of life.

Working with programs like Hiring our Heroes and Transition Trucking, we're giving veterans and *exiting* service-members a path to prosperity,

and amplifying our support for military hiring through our new ATA Workforce Hero's program, which includes a new, theme-wrapped Utility trailer and our new, camouflaged Mack Anthem -- driven throughout the country by America's Road Team Captains.

Our closer look at urban environments is helping us understand how to increase the number of minorities and women supporting our industry.

And considering the average age of our drivers well exceeds the national workforce, we need to elevate the next generation of workers who will inevitably replace them – beginning with 18 to 21 year-olds.

48 states currently allow an 18 year-old to drive a class 8 commercial vehicle... they just can't cross state lines. And they're allowed to do it without any training standards or technology requirements.

ATA's unwavering support for teaching younger talent how to responsibly operate equipment is a measurable gain for safety. The data proves they can do it... and if any further evidence is needed, it's our nation's military, where this same block of amazing talent is tasked with protecting our freedom.

But with all the challenges the trucking industry faces with its workforce, there is the compounding effect of social change.

11 states, DC and Canada have now legalized the recreational use of marijuana... all while our federal government turns a blind eye. And guess who gets caught in the middle?

You can just see the trial lawyers – sitting on the edge of their high, wing-back leather chairs – drooling over the thought of more legal ambiguity. We can't just sit back and hand them yet another opportunity to litigate our industry.

That's why we're announcing the first meeting of ATA's new Controlled Substances, Health and Wellness Subcommittee here in San Diego.

To change direction, we need a member-led policy platform that helps lawmakers, regulators and courts make informed decisions about the impact substance abuse is having on safety and interstate commerce.

We'll also continue pushing federal agencies to finish the mandate ATA got enacted four years ago, permitting hair follicle testing in place of traditional testing... and that those same test results populate the Drug Clearinghouse.



And we'll be working with innovators to accelerate the deployment of technology to detect roadside impairment.

These changes are necessary, and will put ATA policies on the table at a time when decision-makers need our help.

Earlier this year I testified at a House hearing, where Georgia Congressman John Lewis used a powerful example, sharing advice that President Lyndon Johnson offered him and civil rights leaders, including Martin Luther King, for passing the Civil Rights Act of 1965.

Johnson told them he needed their help to get Congress to do the right thing.

Johnson told them: "Make me do it." I like that... I like that. We didn't come to San Diego just to win a battle... we came to win the war. And we are at war.

If anyone in this convention hall thinks the plaintiffs' bar is going to give the trucking industry a free pass, think again. These "nuclear" verdicts are strangling our industry.

If a car going the opposite direction veers out of control, crosses the median and crashes into a truck going 25mph below the speed limit and is brought to a controlled stop after the collision, you shouldn't have to pay \$90 million for a tragedy your driver didn't cause!

We're fed up, and I don't know about you, but I'm sick of playing defense while trial lawyers buy jets and yachts at the expense of trucking jobs.

It's time to go on the offensive, tell our story to policymakers... and take the Hill.

Y' know, advice my 18-year-old daughter got when she arrived this summer at the United States Military Academy at West Point, "You didn't come here to play ping pong... you came here to learn how to fight, and fight you will."

Here in San Diego, our task is clear. We will make tort reform a tier one priority at the state and federal level.

We will use our Call on Washington visits and new Independent Contractor Ambassadors Program to set the record straight. We will continue to grow the ATA Litigation Center, and increase the number of law suits.

And we will back our state association executives that pursue ballot initiatives... going state to state to fight... until we have won. We don't have the luxury of waiting until the next election.

So to our ATA members, I want to personally thank you for your support, leadership and good counsel.

Your generous giving to ATRI, the Litigation Center, Trucking Cares Foundation, Trucking Moves America Forward and Truck PAC are all greatly appreciated.

Keep it coming – we are in this TOGETHER.

And for any prospective member considering that same value, let me make a personal plea... It's time for you to be part of something bigger... and that something is ATA.

Thank you!