

Chris Spear, American Trucking Associations President and CEO
State of the Industry and Association Address (Excerpts)
As Prepared for Delivery
October 25, 2021
Nashville, Tennessee

“Throughout this pandemic, truckers proved how we make a difference. There was no playbook. Yet our drivers are once again this industry’s most valuable players. You’re among an elite list of professionals that include scientists, first responders and healthcare providers. When many in this nation sheltered in place, you maintained composure and answered the call.”



“Five years ago, ATA faced several challenges, most notably representing members on the issues that mattered most. We responded, creating new policy committees and platforms that shape our story and strategies on Capitol Hill, before regulatory agencies and, in every state house in the country.

“Alignment was key, and today we understand why. The weight placed on the supply chain expands well beyond our shores, where container displacement, weeks of backlog as ships wait to be unloaded, chassis and chronic worker shortages, layered with pipeline hacks, a shrinking supply of chips and sensors, natural disasters and, of course, COVID itself. It makes one question how much more weight can the supply chain withstand before it starts to crack or even crumble. That’s why being at the table matters... and ATA’s in a far better position today than ever.”



“Despite playground politics, there’s reason to be optimistic. In the wake of it all, America responded... thanking truckers in every state, Congressional district and community in the country. Our image is what we make of it... it’s who we are and how we want to be perceived. We need to ride the crest of this wave, steering each challenge toward a favorable outcome.”



“We’re a forward leaning association. Your story isn’t partisan: it’s meant for everyone. To that end, we gather here in Nashville on the cusp of Congress passing an ATA tier 1 priority – infrastructure. Proving yet again that winning is still possible, even when our elected leaders could not be more divided.

Despite the odds, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act is an example of what’s possible when we tell our story. In this case, we told it many times, to countless people and for a mighty

long time. In the House and Senate, ATA testified 24 times over the last five years – pretty sure that’s a record – and held countless Calls on Washington on Capitol Hill, where our members walked the halls, knocked on doors and made an ask. Talk about your voice being heard.”



“This bill will deliver a 38 percent increase in funding for our roads and bridges over the next five years – that’s \$477 billion in new funding, including \$347.5 billion for highways and \$37 billion for those decaying bridges. This is historic – the largest infusion of federal funding into our nation’s bridge network since the creation of the Interstate Highway System. And it gives states the certainty and ability to plan, not just patch, building new projects over the course of several years that address our nation’s top freight bottlenecks. The bill will invest in our future workforce as well. Training younger talent how to safely and responsibly operate a class 8 across state lines – ATA’s Drive Safe Act policy. The bill establishes a Women in Trucking Advisory Board at the FMCSA, and it funds a DOT advertisement campaign to promote the trucking profession. It took time and patience educating and building support on both sides of the aisle, but passing this bill is another text book example of how ATA advocacy is shaping our industry and delivering value for our members.”



“At ATA, value has been established... now it’s time for growth. And we’re tasked with doing it in the most extreme and uncertain conditions. That’s why unity matters. We’re advocates of truth and when necessary, instruments of defiance. Truckers are a force for what’s good in this country – a steady reminder of why being part of something bigger than oneself makes all the difference in the lives of those we serve.”



“Let me be clear, ATA is not, nor ever will be, the association of ‘No.’ We’re not complacent obstructionists. When confronting an issue, an opinion different from our own... we double down our effort to improve that outcome. We don’t complain. And we don’t quit. And our persistence and dedication to any challenge, no matter how hard, is why we win.

This ever changing and challenging environment and the outcomes it creates are as much about you, your families and businesses, your employees and customers... as it is our foes. Our battles aren’t fought, nor won... from the sidelines. And if your voice is going to continue to be heard, we’ve got to come together... and get loud. Do that, and we’re the rock that breaks the wave.”