I CAN'T DRIVE 55
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[Assignment: The assignment is the same as for "Dorm Volume."]

(1) With over 120 million cars caravanning across the nation's highways, and 21 million cars being produced each year, the roads are becoming increasingly more crowded. To solve this dilemma, bigger and better roads are being built to accommodate the new cars on the road. Therefore, the 55 mph speed limit is becoming more and more obsolete with the trend of economically sound cars and large expressways.

(2) When the national speed limit law was instituted, there were many reasons that made this decision sound. An energy crisis had been plaguing the nation for several years, making the government institute many programs to help reduce the country's energy consumption. Since large, gas guzzling cars were popular, it was more economical to drive at 55 miles per hour. However, conserving energy no longer justifies such a low speed limit. There is no longer a national energy crisis. Gasoline prices are steadily declining, and individual states are revoking "Energy Days" for their schools. Automobile technology has made cars more economical to drive than ever before. Also, recent tests by Car and Driver Magazine indicate that the best fuel economy is obtained at speeds approaching 60 to 65 miles per hour.

(3) Another reason for enacting this law was safety. Statistical abstracts indicated that highway deaths were on the rise, making the nation's highways more unsafe. Thus, a national speed limit, lower than the previous norm, would make the highways safer for the American citizens. When the law was instituted, however, the locations where the individual accidents occur was not considered. Ninety percent of all highway accidents occur in the intersections of direct-access highways. These are small, usually two lane highways where there are many intersections. However, there has been a recent trend to build more highways in a limited-access style. Here, the highways have very few exits, and they are only "merge" style, making accidents few and far between. Building this type of road is a primary reason for the reduction in highway deaths.

(4) When a recent student survey was conducted, more faults in the 55 mile per hour speed limit law were revealed. Most students respected the logic behind the speed limit in city and rural traffic, although many still did not obey it. However, when the subject of extended highway driving was brought up, the students thought that driving at 55 was too slow to adequately keep their attention on the road. Driving at higher
speeds made it necessary to "stay on one's toes," especially on large, multi-lane highways.

(5) These reasons necessitate a change in the speed limit laws. The concept of a maximum speed limit on every road, no matter what type, is absurd. The laws should be changed to vary the speed limit, depending on the type and condition of the road. A limited-access, major highway could easily handle maximum speeds up to 70 or 80 mph, while smaller, more rural roads may require even a posted speed limit of 45 to 50.