

Bigger Trucks: Too Big To Be Green

Co-sponsor the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (H.R. 1618) Stop Increases in Truck Size and Weight

May 21, 2009

Dear Representative:

On behalf of a broad array of organizations, including the Blue Green Alliance, Sierra Club, International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Natural Resources Defense Council, Communications Workers of America, Environment America, Laborers' International Union of North America and Service Employees International Union, we urge you to co-sponsor the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (H.R. 1618), which would limit the spread of longer and heavier trucks on our nation's highways. This legislation would be a significant step in protecting the environment, improving the quality of life in communities surrounding highways and making the country more energy secure.

Increasing truck size and weight will lead to more traffic, more fuel consumption, and more emissions that contribute to global warming. Today, heavy trucks account for more than 220 million tons of carbon dioxide emissions per year, or six percent of total U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Trucking also produces one third of U.S. mobile source Nitrogen Oxide (NOx) emissions, and nearly a quarter of mobile source particulate matter (PM-10) emissions. Capping tractor-trailer weights and lengths is an effective way to limit one of the fastest-growing sources of greenhouse gas emissions.

To reduce the effect of freight movements by truck on air quality, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recommends reductions in weight, aerodynamic improvements, and reduced idling overnight and at pick-up and drop-off locations. Allowing bigger trucks would conflict with each of these strategies because bigger payloads require bigger and heavier truck tractors to pull them, longer combination vehicles reduce the aerodynamics of the truck-tractor combination, and increased highway congestion attributed to bigger trucks will increase idling.

Proponents of increasing truck size and weight have been wrongly asserting that bigger trucks will mean fewer trucks and therefore be better for the environment. Research and experience shows that increasing truck size and weight do not mean fewer trucks and therefore less pollution. Truck travel grows after an increase in truck size and weight because the bigger rigs divert freight from other modes. Since Congress last increased the gross vehicle weight limit in 1982, truck registrations have increased 72 percent and vehicle miles traveled have more than doubled.

As the number of heavy trucks on the road and the miles they drive have increased, so, too, has the amount of fuel consumed by big trucks. Since 1982, the gallons of fuel heavy trucks burn has more than doubled while heavy truck fuel economy has remained relatively flat. In fact, the transportation sector accounted for over two-thirds of all U.S. petroleum consumption in 2006 and big trucks consumed 18.7 percent of U.S. transportation energy.

Allowing bigger trucks will increase fuel consumption even more because larger truck configurations are less fuel-efficient and because bigger trucks will divert freight from more efficient freight trains. From an energy-intensity perspective, rail consumed 11.6 times less energy per ton-mile and waterborne commerce consumed 8.5 times less energy per ton-mile than heavy-truck transport in 2002.

The facts are clear: heavier trucks would be dirtier and would unnecessarily contribute to air pollution and global warming. The environmental harm caused by trucks has an impact on surrounding communities and the drivers themselves. By cosponsoring the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (H.R. 1618), you will help prevent truck weights and lengths from increasing, while also taking action to improve the environment and make America more energy secure. If you have any questions about the legislation, please feel free to contact Yvette Pena Lopes, Director of Legislation and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Blue Green Alliance, at 202-675-2392.

Sincerely,



Carl Pope, Executive Director
Sierra Club



Larry Cohen, President
Communications Workers of America



James P. Hoffa, General President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters



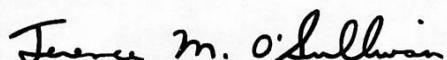
Andy Stern, President
Service Employees International Union



Peter Lehner, Executive Director
Natural Resources Defense Council



David Foster, Executive Director
Blue Green Alliance



Terence M. O'Sullivan, General President
Laborers' International Union of North
America



Margie Alt, Executive Director
Environment America