

January 24, 2012

The Honorable John L. Mica  
Chairman,  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
US House of Representatives  
2165 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II  
Ranking Member,  
Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
US House of Representatives  
2163 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Give States The Option To Increase Truck Weights With An Additional Axle

Dear Chairman Mica and Ranking Member Rahall:

As members of the agriculture industry, we are hindered by antiquated transportation rules and regulations that are inconsistent and impede the flow of commerce for agri-businesses. Inconsistencies promote unsafe shipping on all roads and lead to greater transportation costs that strain the budgets of our family-owned businesses. We strongly encourage you to support improvements in shipping efficiency and safety by including the *Safe and Efficient Transportation Act of 2011* (H.R. 763) in the Highway Bill. This measure gives states the option to increase truck-weight limits to 97,000 pounds with inclusion of a sixth axle on trucks. The additional axle maintains the current weight per axle level with the current standard and will also maintain the same braking capacity. This will increase hauling capacity and will result in fewer trucks on the roads, leading to fewer emissions and improved efficiency.

The federal weight limit has been set at 80,000 pounds for more than 25 years. Farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses need more efficient ways to transport their goods in order to keep up with increasing demand. In fact, freight hauled by trucks in the U.S. is expected to double by 2035. Instead of meeting that demand with more trucks on the road, one feasible option is consolidation of truck loads. Increasing the truck weight limit to 97,000 pounds means that smaller operations can consolidate their goods into fewer shipments, which means there will be fewer trucks on the roads and less expense for small businesses. This is a safe and cost-effective alternative that does not impede commerce.

In fact, one [study](#) shows that since the United Kingdom raised its gross vehicle weight limit to 97,000 pounds for six-axle vehicles in 2001, fatal truck-related accident rates have declined by 35 percent. More freight has been shipped, while vehicle miles traveled to deliver a ton of freight have declined. Meanwhile, the [Transportation Research Board](#) determined that a six-axle truck carrying 97,000 pounds has the same braking distance as an 80,000-pound truck with five axles. These are just two of many existing studies that prove that increasing the truck weight limit to 97,000 pounds with an additional axle is a safe alternative to putting more trucks on our roads.

Many of our producers are seasonal in hauling their goods to market, which means they are not hauling 80,000-pound loads all day, every day. However, we are consistently at a disadvantage to other trucks on the roads. These trucks are allowed to haul a 100,000-pound load of foreign goods on a five-axle trailer to many of the same markets as ours. Unfortunately, our goods, all of which are produced domestically, are limited to 80,000-pound loads. Many of us often hit the federal weight limit with significant space in our trailers, and we are forced to use more trucks than necessary. In all fairness, states need the option to increase the weight limit, or at a minimum, Congress should include a provision in the Highway Bill that allows for the purchase of permits for commercial vehicles to haul agricultural commodities up to 100,000 pounds.

We strongly encourage you not to delay this issue by authorizing another study on whether truck weights should be increased. Studies already show that this is a safe and efficient alternative to putting more trucks on the road. We don't need another study, we need action.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef Association  
Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association  
Professional Rodeo Stock Contractors Association  
Agricultural & Food Transporters Conference, American Trucking Associations, Inc.  
Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Meat Institute  
National Chicken Council  
National Turkey Federation  
National Pork Producers Council  
Livestock Marketing Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation