

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: Oppose Including Language In The Highway Bill That Prohibits Transporting Horses Or Any Livestock In Double Deck Trailers

Dear Chairman Mica and Ranking Member Rahall:

As members of the agriculture industry, we strongly oppose language in the Highway Bill that prohibits the use of double deck trailers to transport horses. The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation recently marked up The Commercial Motor Vehicle Safety Enhancement Act of 2011 (S. 1950). Included in S. 1950 is controversial language (Section 905) that severely limits our ability to transport horses and sets a dangerous precedent for the transportation of all livestock and other agricultural goods. We strongly encourage you to oppose any attempt to include language in the Highway Bill that prohibits transporting horses or any livestock in double deck trailers.

Section 905 prohibits the transportation of horses in double deck trailers. Thousands of horses are successfully hauled each year in specially modified double deck trucks. Those of us who are actively engaged in transporting horses and other livestock go to great lengths to make sure we do so in the safest, most humane conditions possible. Unfortunately, accidents do happen. That is an inherent risk for all forms of transportation. However, double deck trailers are no more at risk for accidents than other trailers, particularly when they are properly maintained and driven by qualified individuals.

Section 905 does not address genuine safety concerns; instead, it singles out one form of transportation without providing credible evidence as to how banning the use of double deck trailers will increase safety. Section 905 bans the use of double deck trailers for all horses based on accidents and information involved in the transport of slaughter horses, not performance horses in trucks with modifications made to safely transport these valuable animals. Again, the horses we transport are not being transported for slaughter. This language goes beyond existing USDA regulations aimed at transportation of horses for slaughter and applies this prohibition to transportation of ALL horses.

As productive members of the agriculture industry who rely on the safe transportation of livestock for our livelihood, we are very concerned that Congress prohibiting one form of transportation for one species will set a dangerous precedent for Congress to establish transportation prohibitions for all livestock. Furthermore, it is very dangerous for Congress to make laws prohibiting or restricting well-established industry practices without first consulting with the affected industry.

Make no mistake, the welfare and safety of our animals is our top priority. We believe that existing government and industry standards, when followed correctly, provide a safe transportation environment for those who are hauling animals and others on the road. We need responsible legislation that addresses actual safety concerns, not legislation that pushes the agendas of animal rights activist groups.

Please oppose any attempt to include language in the Highway Bill that prohibits transporting horses or any livestock in double deck trailers.

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

National Chicken Council

National Turkey Federation

National Pork Producers Council

Livestock Marketing Association