

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: Include Provisions In The Highway Bill That Provide Exemptions For Agriculture

Dear Chairman Mica and Ranking Member Rahall:

As members of the agriculture industry, we urge you to write a Highway Bill that brings clarity and consistency to our transportation laws. Current transportation rules and regulations are inconsistent and hinder the flow of commerce for agri-businesses. Inconsistencies lead to greater transportation costs that strain the budgets of family-owned businesses. While many of us are not professional truck drivers and haul seasonal shipments at best, we face growing pressures from the federal government to be treated like full-time, commercial truck drivers. Even though we are not for-hire drivers, we go to great lengths to make sure we comply with all safety standards and transportation laws. We need uniformity and reciprocity of farm exemptions across state lines, and we strongly oppose any federal requirement of commercial driver's licenses for farmers and ranchers.

In order to promote consistency in agricultural transportation, we encourage you to include the following provisions in the Highway Bill:

- Create a uniform mileage exemption for farm-use vehicles exceeding 26,000 pounds.
- Include the provisions of H.R. 3265, sponsored by Congressman Sam Graves (R-Mo.), which waives certain driving restrictions during planting and harvest seasons for producers who are transporting agricultural goods.
- Include the provisions of the *Farmers' Freedom Act of 2011* (H.R. 2414) sponsored by Congressman James Lankford (R-Okla.). This legislation exempts certain farm vehicles (including the individual operating the vehicle) from certain federal requirements (for a commercial driver's license, drug testing, medical certificates and hours of service restrictions) governing the operation of motor vehicles. Currently, vehicles with a gross vehicle weight (GVW) under 26,001 pounds are not subject to these requirements; however, a one-ton pickup pulling a small stock trailer can easily exceed this weight. When crossing state lines, these regulations only become more burdensome as some states exempt farm vehicles while others do not. These regulations can be particularly burdensome for farmers and ranchers living in counties bordering another state.

These changes are simple but necessary for family-owned rural businesses to compete in a global economy. We encourage you to stand up for agriculture and include these provisions in the Highway Bill.

Sincerely,

National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Professional Rodeo Stock Contractors Association
National Turkey Federation
Livestock Marketing Association

Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association
National Chicken Council
National Pork Producers Council
American Farm Bureau Federation