



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

June 24, 2015

The Honorable Thad Cochran, Chair
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Vice Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Cochran and Vice Chairwoman Mikulski:

We are writing to express our staunch opposition to anti-truck safety provisions included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations bill as well as any anti-safety amendments which may be offered during markup. We are joined in our opposition by a broad coalition including truck crash victims and survivors, public health and safety organizations, 16 CEOs of major trucking companies, labor, law enforcement, short line and regional railroads, and railway suppliers who are all deeply concerned about these dangerous and deadly attempts to weaken truck safety. These “riders” amount to a dangerous, all-out assault on the safety of the motoring public, truck drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and our nation’s infrastructure.

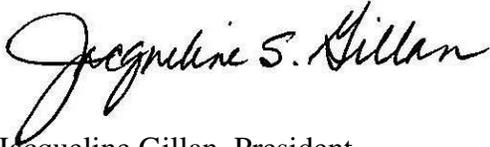
The timing of this attack on safety is especially egregious considering that deaths from large truck crashes are dramatically up while overall motor vehicle crash fatalities are down. Over the past five years alone (2009-2013), fatalities from large truck crashes have increased by 17% and injuries have increased by 28%. Every year on average there are 4,000 people killed and 100,000 more injured in large truck crashes which is equivalent to a major airplane crash every week of the year. Further, commercial motor vehicle crashes continue to cost society \$99 billion annually. By any measure, this is an alarming death toll which will be made worse if these anti-safety provisions are enacted into law.

Some members of the trucking industry are pushing for a “wish list” of safety repeals and rollbacks that put their trucking profits ahead of public safety. These include the FedEx proposal to overturn the law in 39 states and force every state to allow “Double 33s” on federal and local roads, which we expect to be offered as an amendment during markup. These are extra-long trucks exceeding 84 feet in length pulling two 33 foot long trailers. While champions of the proposal are suggesting it is a minor tweak in policy on the length of trucks, it is actually a major alteration of national transportation policy which will have severe consequences for safety, infrastructure, intermodal freight transportation, economic viability of trucking companies and the working conditions of truck drivers. Additionally, the American public opposes them and so do state officials. For example, the Mississippi Transportation Commission and the Illinois State Senate both recently passed resolutions opposing double 33s, and Republican lawmakers in Pennsylvania sent a letter opposing increases to truck size and weight limits.

Additionally, we oppose any extension of the “Tired Truckers” pilot program which puts truck drivers and the public at unacceptable risk of death and injury due to driver fatigue, a well-documented and widespread problem in the trucking industry. We also oppose any provision or amendment which gives specific states or industries exemptions from federal truck size and weight limits. Lastly, the bill seeks to delay an on-going agency rulemaking concerning adequate insurance requirements for motor carriers including trucks and passenger-carrying buses. This interference unnecessarily intervenes with an important agency regulatory decision.

If these provisions or amendments advance, they will jeopardize safety and lead to more truck crash deaths by allowing overweight and oversized trucks to be being driven by over-tired and under-insured truckers across the country. We urge you to amend this bill and drop these industry-supported provisions and reject any anti-safety amendments which further industry goals at the expense of the lives and wallets of the American public. Advancing highway safety and saving lives should be the top priority of this Committee. The American public expects no less.

Sincerely,



Jacqueline Gillan, President



Joan Claybrook, Consumer Co-Chair

cc: Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee