



Trucking groups back higher weight

By eTrucker Staff

More than 100 associations and companies — including Kraft Foods, MillerCoors and International Paper — today, June 8, officially launched the Coalition for Transportation Productivity (www.transportationproductivity.org), urging Congress to responsibly raise the federal vehicle weight limit on U.S. interstates.

CTP supports the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act of 2009 (H.R. 1799), which would increase the interstate weight limit, which it says would improve trucking productivity and allow for safer highways, a cleaner environment and a stronger economy.

“America’s freight transportation infrastructure is on the verge of becoming overwhelmed over the next decade,” says CTP Co-Chair John Runyan. “Freight hauled by trucks in the U.S. is expected to double by 2025, and truck traffic is growing 11 times faster than road capacity. The Coalition for Transportation Productivity is asking Congress to responsibly reform truck weight limits with proper safeguards to allow the same amount of freight to be carried on fewer trucks, which will improve the efficiency of our interstates, reduce fuel use, and curb emissions.”

Legislators in Congress are lining up on one side of the truck size and weight issue or the other. Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) and Rep. James McGovern (D-Mass.) introduced legislation (S. 779, H.R. 1618) that would extend the current limit of 80,000 pounds and maximum length of 53 feet for tractor-trailer trucks on interstate highways to the National Highway System. The NHS covers some 160,000 miles of highway, while interstates represent 44,000 miles. Within the trucking community, the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters are backing the Lautenberg-McGovern bill, citing safety and infrastructure concerns.

On the other side is CTP-backed legislation (H.R. 1799) introduced by Reps. Michael Michaud (D-Maine) and Jean Schmidt (R-Ohio) that would authorize states to allow trucks with a gross weight of up to 97,000 pounds to operate on interstate highways within their state provided that trucks operating above 80,000 pounds add a sixth axle, with brakes. In addition, heavier vehicles would pay a fee that would be dedicated to bridge investments in states that authorize their use. The American Trucking Associations supports H.R. 1799, saying it could allow trucking companies to use more efficient vehicles to deliver more freight while making fewer trips. The result, ATA says, would be fewer crashes, less fuel burned, less congestion and reduced carbon and toxic emissions.

“Accident rates among heavy vehicles are strongly tied to the vehicle miles a truck must travel to deliver a ton of freight,” Runyan says. “A proposal like H.R. 1799 would reduce the number of vehicle miles and overall number of trucks needed to deliver a specific amount of freight, making roads safer while cutting fuel and emissions by as much as 19 percent for each ton carried.”

Legislation introduced May 14 would increase the proportion of national freight transportation provided by modes other than trucks by 10 percent by 2020. Sens. Lautenberg and Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) introduced the Federal Surface Transportation Policy and Planning Act of 2009, which they say is aimed at establishing a unifying and comprehensive strategy for the U.S. surface transportation system. The measure also targets reducing per-capita motor vehicle miles traveled on an annual basis, reducing surface transportation-generated CO2 levels 40 percent by 2030, and reducing motor vehicle-related deaths 50 percent by 2030.