

JAMES P. McGOVERN
3RD DISTRICT, MASSACHUSETTS

VICE CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON RULES

COMMITTEE ON BUDGET

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-2103

<http://www.mcgobern.house.gov>

May 13, 2008

438 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-2103
(202) 225-6101

DISTRICT OFFICES:
34 MECHANIC STREET
WORCESTER, MA 01608
(508) 831-7356

ATTLEBORO OFFICE:
8 NORTH MAIN STREET, ROOM 200
ATTLEBORO, MA 02703
(508) 431-8025

FALL RIVER OFFICE:
218 SOUTH MAIN STREET, ROOM 204
FALL RIVER, MA 02721
(508) 677-0140

MARLBOROUGH OFFICE:
255 MAIN STREET, ROOM 104
MARLBOROUGH, MA 01752
(508) 460-9292

HEAVIER TRUCKS DON'T MEAN GREENER TRUCKS

Dear Colleague:

As work begins on SAFETEA-LU reauthorization and, the trucking industry is gearing up for another major push to allow super sized, unsafe trucks on America's highways. In fact, organizations that support increased truck size and weight limits will be visiting House and Senate offices May 13th and 14th with its perennial appeal for an increase in maximum truck weights from the current 80,000 pounds up to 97,000 pounds.

The only difference this time around is that bigger trucks are being painted green in an effort to divert attention from the serious highway safety, infrastructure damage and taxpayer concerns they raise. The trucking industry is claiming that heavier and longer trucks will help in the fight against global warming, has claimed that this "argument" is gaining traction on Capitol Hill.

We all recognize we need creative new ways of decreasing the emissions that are fueling global climate change, but heavier, unsafe trucks are not part of the solution.

A centerpiece of the trucking industry's new campaign is the assertion that bigger trucks will mean fewer trucks. Experience shows that this is false. Increases in truck size and weight are likely to accelerate growth in truck transportation, not decrease it. In 1982, Congress passed legislation that required all states to raise the maximum allowable Interstate weight limit to 80,000 pounds. Despite the increase in truck weight, the total number of miles traveled by combination trucks increased by 63 percent from 1980 to 1993, according to the Federal Highway Administration.

Truck travel grows after an increase in truck size and weight because the bigger rigs divert freight from other transportation modes. As such, allowing heavier trucks would represent a fundamental strategic decision that would shape the future of freight transportation in the United States for years to come. With rail, for example, 3 to 7 times more fuel efficient than trucks, how could diverting even more freight onto our highways possibly help curb the emissions that contribute to global climate change?

Allowing heavier and longer trucks will mean more trucks on the road, more fossil fuel burned, more of the emissions that contribute to climate change, and more congestion, not less. If these

organizations pay you a visit with this new pro-environment pitch for bigger trucks, please keep in mind that heavier trucks are not as "green" as they may claim.

I have introduced legislation, H.R. 3929, the Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (SHIPA), which extends the common sense weight limits we already have on our National Highway System. The weight limit for nearly all portions of the NHS is 40 tons, but ineffective enforcement and state permits which allow trucks to exceed this amount, severely undermine the regulation. In some instances, these permits allow trucks to double the limit. Transportation officials across the country have expressed concerns about the damage being done by these heavier trucks, and investigators of the tragic Minnesota bridge collapse have suggested that excessive weight limits contributed to the disaster. In fact, in the year before the collapse, the state Transportation Department issued 48 overweight load permits with excesses up to 72 ½ tons.

For more information on H.R. 3929 or you wish to cosponsor, please contact Jay Lucey in my office at 5-6101 or jay.lucey@mail.house.gov

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James P. McGovern". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "M".

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress