

Bigger Trucks = Bigger Safety Problems
Please Co-Sponsor H.R. 1618 / S. 779

July 13, 2009

Dear Member of Congress:

We are writing to relay our strong support for H.R. 1618 and S. 779, the *Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act of 2009* (SHIPA), and urge you to co-sponsor this important legislation. The SHIPA bill is co-sponsored by more than 100 Democratic and Republican members of Congress, including Representatives Gerald Connolly and Frank Wolfe. It is supported by national highway and truck safety groups, victims and survivors of truck crashes, as well as leading national environmental and public interest organizations. Between 2003 and 2007, 549 people died in truck crashes on Virginia roads. Nationally, about 5,000 people die in truck crashes every year and over 100,000 are injured. Large trucks, which represent 9 percent of all vehicles involved in fatal crashes, are responsible for 12 percent of all crash fatalities but make up only 3 percent of all registered vehicles.

The purpose of SHIPA is to prevent the constant increases in truck sizes and weights on the non-Interstate portion of the federal National Highway System (NHS) that endanger the motoring public as well as our roads and bridges. Enactment of SHIPA will extend the safety and infrastructure protection that was achieved in 1991 when Congress overwhelmingly enacted the freeze on Longer Combination Vehicles (LCV) in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA).

We urge you to support enactment of the SHIPA bill for these important reasons:

- **Bigger, Heavier Trucks Are Less Safe.** Bigger trucks take *longer to stop and roll over more frequently*. Deficient brake systems are already a leading factor in truck crashes, allowing bigger trucks would make matters worse. The National Academy of Sciences determined that *increased truck weights in the U.S. could not be recommended because nothing was known about their safety* in its Transportation Research Board Special Report No. 267 published in 2002.
- **Allowing Bigger and Heavier Trucks Will Result In More Trucks On The Road.** According to statistics from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the Federal Highway Administration, increases in truck sizes and weights *always* result in *more bigger, heavier trucks than before, not less*.
- **Bigger, Heavier Trucks Inflict More Damage to Roads and Bridges.** Allowing giant trucks *weighing 97,000 pounds or more* on U.S. roads and bridges would *radically increase damage* to highway pavement and bridges. Overweight trucks create a disproportionate level of damage to our roads and bridges, consistently documented in research studies conducted by the states, the federal government, and the National Academy of Sciences. According to the America Society of Civil Engineers latest infrastructure report card, 28% of Virginia's bridges are structurally deficient or functionally obsolete and 23% of our major roads are in poor or mediocre condition.

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- **The SHIPA Act Would Retain the 1991 Freeze on Longer Combination Vehicles (LCV).** H.R. 1799, legislation opposed by our organizations, would *overturn the statutory freeze* on the weights of giant LCVs such as Triple-Trailers and Turnpike Doubles enacted in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and allow giant multi-trailer trucks *weighing significantly more than ever before*.
- **Motorists Unfairly Subsidize Highway and Bridge Damage Inflicted by Extra-Heavy Trucks.** Due to *the chronic underpayment by heavy trucks*, motorists pay more than their fair share of highway user fees for the damage inflicted to U.S. highways and bridges. This is in direct contradiction of the findings of the December 2007 *Transportation for Tomorrow* final report released by the National Transportation Policy and Revenue Commission as well as the Federal Highway Administration's *Highway Cost Allocation Study: 2000 Addendum*.
- **Bigger, Heavier Trucks Guzzle More Fuel and Increase Air Pollution.** Allowing bigger trucks would *dramatically increase* heavy truck fuel consumption and *produce much higher emissions* at a time when Congress is seeking to reduce the U.S. reliance on carbon-based fuels and to address global warming. Within transportation, truck freight represents the fastest growing mode of pollution producing more than 220 million tons of carbon dioxide each year. Trucks with heavier gross weights require larger engines that decrease fuel economy on a miles-per-gallon basis according to the Western Uniformity Scenario Analysis.
- **The American Public Decisively and Consistently Opposes Increases in Truck Size and Weights.** A recent public opinion poll released in May 2009 by Lake Research Partners found that only 16% of Americans support allowing increased truck weights and 81% feel that double and triple trailer trucks are less safe and more dangerous than trucks pulling a single trailer.

Enacting H.R. 1618 and S. 779, the SHIPA Act, would save lives and prevent injuries, limit damage to our crumbling roads and bridges, reduce global warming pollution and curb our dependence on oil, and help achieve a balanced multi-modal transportation system. We urge you to support this sound and sensible legislation and look forward to working with you to build a safer, cleaner and more efficient transportation future for our nation.

Sincerely,

Environment Virginia
RAIL Solutions
Sierra Club of Virginia
Truck Safety Coalition
Virginia Association of Railway Patrons
Virginia Sierra Club – Mount Vernon Chapter