

November 10, 2015

Dear Surface Transportation Conferees:

The undersigned agricultural organizations support the prompt enactment of multi-year surface transportation legislation. We appreciate your recognition that infrastructure and transportation policy are vitally important to our nation's competitiveness and economic well-being, including the movement of agricultural products and crop inputs. We especially urge you to include the following provisions in the House and Senate bills that would help in the movement of agricultural products:

Senate Preferred Provisions:

- Port Performance Act – Beginning with section 31301 in H.R. 22: Ensures regular port performance metric collection and reporting, transparency that will assist agricultural and other shippers to maintain competitiveness in international markets.
- Petitions for Regulatory Relief – Section 32201 in H.R. 22: Makes the livestock exemption to the 30-minute rest break permanent and provides the Secretary of Transportation with authority to grant other Hours of Service exemptions.

House Preferred Provisions:

- Minimum Financial Responsibility – Section 5501 in H.R. 3763: Requires the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a prescribed analysis on the potential impacts of raising the minimum financial responsibility on the motor carrier industry prior to issuing a rule. We oppose any increase in minimum financial responsibility requirements until such an analysis is completed and thoroughly reviewed by stakeholders.
- Covered Farm Vehicles – Section 5509 of H.R. 3763: Protects states from losing federal funding if additional regulatory relief were provided to covered farm vehicles and drivers.

Senate and House Provisions:

- Endorsements – Section 33101 in H.R. 22 and adopted as an amendment in the House: Provides an exemption to a hazardous materials endorsement for custom harvesters and other similar equipment to allow the operation of vehicles providing fuel for agriculture operations.
- National Freight and Multimodal Policies – Numerous provisions in H.R. 22 and H.R. 3763: Update and create policies that would greatly benefit agriculture by focusing federal policy on and directing resources to the most strategic freight assets to improve the safety, efficiency and reliability of the movement of freight.
- Commercial Driver Access – Section 32403 in H.R. 22 and Section 5404 in H.R. 3763: Create pilot programs that would allow CDL drivers between 18 and 21 to drive across state lines, which needs to be addressed since all 49 states allow CDL drivers under 21 to drive in-state. However, we believe both Senate and House provisions fail to adequately address the needs of the agricultural industry and their rural communities, and would be significantly improved through the inclusion of the Crawford-Ashford Short-Haul proposal.

The U.S. economy and all Americans, particularly those located in rural areas, require a surface transportation infrastructure network that can keep pace with growing demands. A long-term commitment to prioritize and invest in our aging infrastructure is essential to achieve this goal.

We applaud your efforts in putting this legislation together and we look forward to working with you in supporting the aforementioned provisions as the legislation moves toward final enactment.

Sincerely,

Agribusiness Association of Iowa
Agribusiness Council of Indiana
Agricultural and Food Transporters Conference
Agricultural Retailers Association
Alabama Feed and Grain Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
California Grain & Feed Association
Corn Refiners Association
Far West Agribusiness Association
Georgia Agribusiness Council
Grain and Feed Association of Illinois
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils
Iowa Institute for Cooperatives
Kansas Cooperative Council
Kansas Grain and Feed Association
Meat Import Council of America
Michigan Agri-Business Association
Michigan Bean Shippers
Minnesota Grain and Feed Association
Missouri Agribusiness Association
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pasta Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Potato Council
National Sorghum Producers
National Turkey Federation
Nebraska Grain and Feed Association
North American Meat Institute
North American Millers' Association
North Dakota Grain Dealers Association

Northeast Agribusiness and Feed Alliance
Ohio AgriBusiness Association
Oklahoma Agribusiness Retailers Association
Oklahoma Agricultural Cooperative Council, Inc.
Oklahoma Grain and Feed Association
Pacific Northwest Grain & Feed Association
Rocky Mountain Agribusiness Association
South Dakota Grain & Feed Association
The Agriculture Transportation Coalition
The Fertilizer Institute
United Fresh Produce Association
United States Hide, Skin and Leather Association
USA Rice
US Custom Harvesters
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association
Wisconsin Agri-Business Association