

February 20, 2013

Congressman Mike Michaud (ME-02)
1724 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Congressman Reid Ribble (WI-08)
1513 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Agriculture Supports H.R. 612, the *Safe and Efficient Transportation Act*

Dear Congressman Michaud and Congressman Ribble:

As members of the agriculture industry, we are hindered by antiquated transportation rules and regulations that are inconsistent and impede the flow of commerce for agri-businesses. Inconsistencies promote unsafe shipping on all roads and lead to greater transportation costs that strain the budgets of our family-owned businesses. On behalf of the agriculture industry, we thank you for supporting improvements in shipping efficiency and safety by introducing the *Safe and Efficient Transportation Act* (H.R. 612). This measure gives states the option to increase truck-weight limits to 97,000 pounds with inclusion of a sixth axle on trucks. The additional axle maintains the current weight per axle level with the current standard and will also maintain the same braking capacity. This will increase hauling capacity and will result in fewer trucks on the roads, leading to fewer emissions and improved efficiency.

The federal weight limit has been set at 80,000 pounds for more than 25 years. Farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses need more efficient ways to transport their goods in order to keep up with increasing demand. In fact, freight hauled by trucks in the U.S. is expected to double by 2035. Instead of meeting that demand with more trucks on the road, one feasible option is consolidation of truck loads. Increasing the truck weight limit to 97,000 pounds means that smaller operations can consolidate their goods into fewer shipments, which means there will be fewer trucks on the roads and less expense for small businesses. This is a safe and cost-effective alternative that does not impede commerce.

In fact, one [study](#) shows that since the United Kingdom raised its gross vehicle weight limit to 97,000 pounds for six-axle vehicles in 2001, fatal truck-related accident rates have declined by 35 percent. More freight has been shipped, while vehicle miles traveled to deliver a ton of freight have declined. Meanwhile, the [Transportation Research Board](#) determined that a six-axle truck carrying 97,000 pounds has the same braking distance as an 80,000-pound truck with five axles. These are just two of many existing studies that prove that increasing the truck weight limit to 97,000 pounds with an additional axle is a safe alternative to putting more trucks on our roads.

Many of our producers are seasonal in hauling their goods to market, which means they are not hauling 80,000-pound loads all day, every day. However, we are consistently at a disadvantage to other trucks on the roads. These trucks are allowed to haul a 100,000-pound load of foreign goods on a five-axle trailer to many of the same markets as ours. Unfortunately, our goods, which are produced domestically, are limited to 80,000-pound loads. Many of us often hit the federal weight limit with significant space in our trailers, and we are forced to use more trucks than necessary.

Agriculture cannot afford to continue delaying this issue any longer. The evidence shows that this is a safe and efficient alternative to putting more trucks on the road. We encourage all Members of Congress who support safe and efficient transportation and small businesses to co-sponsor H.R. 612, the *Safe and Efficient Transportation Act*.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
Agricultural & Food Transporters Conference, American Trucking Associations, Inc.
American Farm Bureau Federation®
American Meat Institute
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Milk Producers Federation
National Pork Producers Council
National Turkey Federation
Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association