



September 2015

## **AF&PA Urges Members of Congress to Support Legislation for More Efficient Trucks**

**Support H.R. 3488 introduced by Rep. Reid Ribble (WI-8) to allow states to increase Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) on federal interstate highways to 91,000 pounds and requires an additional axle.**

AF&PA supports making critical improvements to America's transportation efficiency by safely increasing the maximum Gross Vehicle Weight (GVW) on federal Interstate highways with an additional axle. Truck weight limits have been frozen at 80,000 pounds on the National Highway System for over 30 years.

- If the weight limit were increased to 91,000 pounds, the number of truck trips taken by the forest products industry could potentially be reduced by 1.4 million, while the number of truck miles traveled could decline by 250 million.

These truck trips are essential to deliver logs to mills, and distribute finished and semi-finished products such as pulp, paper and paperboard, boxes, envelopes, other converted paper and paperboard products, lumber, and panels to customers.

**CAPACITY CRISIS:** The forest products industry faces challenges transporting raw materials to our mills and finished products to the marketplace – it's costly and difficult.

- There is a critical capacity issue for shippers: the American Trucking Association's Truck Tonnage index – the bellwether for the state of trucking demand – is at an all time high.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) estimates that by 2025, the amount of freight shipped throughout the U.S. will increase by 87 percent from what it was in 2000.
- Meanwhile, available truck capacity has dropped by 16 percent since 2008 – putting additional financial strain on shippers.

**EFFICIENCY:** We support an increase in truck weights on federal interstates with the addition of a sixth axle for safety.

- Our proposal provides each **state** the **option** to increase weight limits on interstates where they think it is best.
- The change would decrease congestion, emissions and energy consumption and increase efficiency and our global competitiveness.
  - Our proposal takes trucks off the road by making them more productive – an estimated 25 percent reduction in heavy truck loads for all shippers.
  - The U.S. DOT estimates that allowing six-axle trucks to carry more weight on interstates will save \$2.4 billion in pavement restoration costs over the next 20 years.
  - The U.S. DOT also estimates the impact of implementing the six-axle 91,000 pound trucks would reduce logistics costs by 1.4 percent annually, yielding significant logistics savings of approximately \$5.6 billion



**SAFETY:** Our proposal, which does not increase the size of the truck, will improve safety on our nation's interstates and reduce fatalities on state and local roads by putting trucks on the interstates where they belong.

- More than 90 percent of states allow heavier trucks to access some or all secondary roads, but federal regulations keep them off the interstates – the safest place for truck shipments. In addition, many of the heavier trucks that are already permitted on state roads operate on only five axles – instead of the safer six axles.
- The U.S. DOT found that the six-axle, 91,000 pound configuration features comparable handling characteristics and improved braking ability, stopping one foot faster than the 80,000-pound five-axle truck currently used throughout the nation. Based on the findings of a 2009 Wisconsin DOT study, if our provision had been in place in 2006, 90 truck-related accidents would have been prevented in the state during that year.
- Since the U.K. raised its weight limit for six-axle for vehicles in 2001, fatal truck-related accidents have declined by 35 percent.
- The Maine Bureau of Highway Safety recently noted that congressional action, which allowed Maine to provide permits for heavier, six-axle trucks to have full access to the interstate highways may have “helped to make roads safer.” This legislative change, which started as a one-year pilot project in the FY 2010 Transportation Appropriations bill, was made permanent for 20 years in 2011. Maine has experienced the least amount of road fatalities in 70 years since the pilot program was implemented.

Highway construction and transportation policy must be reauthorized or extended by Congress this year to allow federal dollars to be used for highway construction projects. In 2012, Congress passed a short-term reauthorization bill that included a directive for the DOT to study truck weights and lengths. On June 5, over 7 months after the study was due, DOT released its technical report, a summary of their findings and their plan for completing the full report later this year.

**Our national highway system cannot accommodate the coming surge in increased freight without also making changes to reduce the number of trucks hauling that freight. Congress should revisit truck weight policy to allow each truck to carry more freight safely and efficiently.**