

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 2009

Reduce Emissions and Improve Roadway Safety
Cosponsor H.R. 1799

Dear Colleague:

We write to ask you to cosponsor H.R. 1799, the Safe and Efficient Transportation Act of 2009. This bipartisan bill would give states the ability to increase the weight limit on interstate highways within their borders for specially configured six-axle, single trailer vehicles. We are confident this legislation will result in safer roads, environmental improvements and a stronger economy.

This legislation has been the subject of a good deal of misinformation and we hope you will take a few minutes to review the facts and join us in support of an important and timely measure.

The purpose of this bill is quite simple: to allow shippers of heavier cargo to more completely fill their existing 53' trailers without compromising safety. There is nothing in the bill that allows for larger trucks. By requiring an additional axle for weight between 80,000 to 97,000 pounds, the vehicle displaces the same or less weight per tire and has virtually the same stopping capacity as today's 80,000 pound five-axle rigs. Not every truck and not every industry will utilize these heavier vehicles. However, for manufacturers of heavy goods, this change will provide significant increases in transportation efficiency and will lower the carbon footprint of their products.

Opponents of H.R. 1799 claim that truck traffic in this country skyrocketed after the last weight increase in the 1980s, as if the weight increase were responsible. Economic growth drove the increase (RGDP increased 126% between 1982 and 2008) and if we want a growing economy, we should continue to plan for increased trucking demand in the years ahead. The passage of H.R. 1799 will not reduce overall truck traffic. It will simply slow its growth.

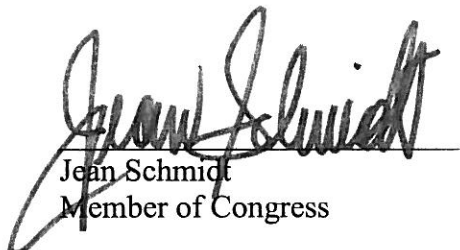
H.R. 1799 gives individual states the complete authority to determine whether heavier six-axle vehicles can utilize interstate highways within their borders. As states determine more of their interstate bridges can carry these heavier loads (or fix those that cannot) the utilization of the more productive vehicle will continue to grow.

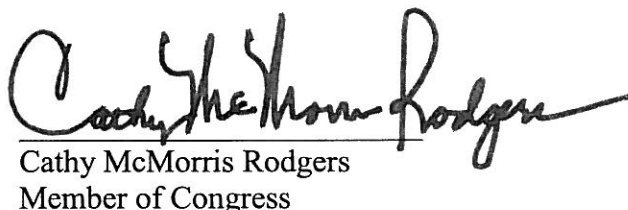
Finally, it is important to note that both the academic and empirical evidence to date indicates that the utilization of heavier weight limits will improve safety. A recent study of the use of these trucks in the United Kingdom demonstrated significant actual reductions in truck-related accidents. The state of Wisconsin, in a study released this past January, showed that the use of these more efficient six-axle vehicles with heavier loads would have resulted in 90 fewer truck-related accidents in the state in 2006.

H.R. 1799 is a carefully crafted measure that enables states to consider the use of heavier vehicles under very specific conditions. Where allowed, this bill will, improve highway safety, give companies the ability to reduce their carbon emissions, and strengthen our manufacturing sector. We appreciate your consideration and urge you to cosponsor H.R. 1799.

For additional information or to cosponsor this legislation, please contact Justin Louchheim with Rep. Schmidt at 53164 or Justin.Louchheim@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,


Jean Schmidt
Member of Congress


Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Member of Congress