

# INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF TEAMSTERS

JAMES P. HOFFA  
General President

25 Louisiana Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20001



KEN HALL  
General Secretary-Treasurer

202.624.6800  
[www.teamster.org](http://www.teamster.org)

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## Good Bye Weekend! Hello 80 Hour Workweek!

United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative:

I am contacting you to oppose two potential floor amendments to the Transportation Housing and Urban Development (THUD) FY '15 Appropriations bill that will weaken highway safety standards by putting fatigued drivers on the road in bigger, heavier trucks. Specifically, The Teamsters Union asks you oppose any efforts to delay, revise, or replace the current Hours-of-Service 34-hour restart provision and to reject any attempt to increase truck size and weights, especially the size of double trailers from the current 28 feet to 33 feet.

Over 600,000 of our 1.4 million Teamster members start their workday by turning a key to start a truck that travels over our nation's highways, and their safety is of paramount concern to us. Truck driving is a very stressful job, especially with the congestion on our overburdened highway system. Drivers have to be especially alert these days as they have less time and distance to change lanes or stop quickly. It makes little sense, therefore, to shorten even more the time that truck drivers have to rest, recuperate, and get back on the road and to put them in bigger combination vehicles that require greater stopping distances, more difficult lane changes, and longer merging areas to get up to speed with traffic flow.

Most of us cherish our weekends, that 48-hour period that lets us relax and tend to personal business. But some motor carriers push their drivers to squeeze every possible hour out of them that they can – 60 to 70 hours or more in a week depending on their operation – leaving a driver only 34 hours, 14 hours shy of a weekend, to restart their clock and get back on the road for another 60 to 70 hours of driving time. That adds up to cumulative fatigue, and the Teamsters Union is not interested in having its drivers and their families share the road with tired, sleep-deprived drivers. Limiting the already short 34-hour restart provision to once every seven days (168 hours) is not unreasonable. This essentially allows drivers to use the restart every other week instead of each week, getting some proper rest in between those periods. The requirement that drivers have two consecutive rest periods from 1 a.m. to 5 a.m. is designed to address fatigue related to constant back-of-the clock work and give drivers rest during the body's regular circadian rhythm. The proposed amendment would undo those two critical safeguards. **And, if you vote for this amendment, you will permit drivers behind the wheel for more than 80 hours in a week!**

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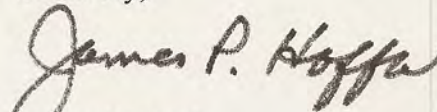
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Admittedly, not all motor carriers run their drivers to the limit of their hours-of-service, but the degree to which it does happen isn't well known or documented. That's why instead of changing current regulations that have taken more than two decades to finalize through the regulatory process and the courts, the House should "keep the horse in front of the cart" and allow the Department of Transportation to conduct a study of truck driver fatigue using data from Electronic Logging Devices that accurately reflects actual driving and on-duty time. What the House shouldn't do is adopt a change in Hours-of-Service regulations without knowing what the effect on highway safety will be. The Teamsters Union strongly urges you to reject this ill-advised change to current Hours-of-Service rules during consideration of the THUD Appropriations Bill.

What could make matters worse, however, is another potential amendment to increase the current 28 foot double trailers to 33 feet. This undermines a current on-going Department of Transportation Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study, mandated by Congress through MAP-21, which is intended to examine the effects of bigger trucks on highway safety and on an already aging and deteriorating infrastructure system. It also preempts work by the National Freight Advisory Committee, on which I serve, that is developing recommendations to advance a 10-year National Freight Policy intended to promote safe and efficient intermodal transportation. Most importantly, it will force 33 foot double trailers down the throats of the 39 states (AL, AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, GA, HI, IL, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MI, MN, MS, MO, NE, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, OH, OK, PA, RI, SC, SD, TN, TX, VT, VA, WA, WV, WI) that currently prohibit them. What ever happened to states' rights? And what is the rationale for a piecemeal increase in truck size for a specific vehicle combination without any objective review of the operational and safety issues related to 33 foot trailers? This is nothing more than a cave-in to special interests that should be soundly rejected by the House.

I again ask you to oppose any change in the current 34-hour restart rule and reject any attempt to increase truck size and weight, especially an increase in 28 foot double trailers. The Teamsters Union is serious about protecting the safety of our members and their families, and therefore, votes on these issues will be entered on our scorecard so that our members can see for themselves how their Representative voted on these issues.

Sincerely,



James P. Hoffa  
General President

JPH/fm