The MOVE Act Endangers Motorists and Damages Infrastructure

Oppose H.R. 7496

Prepared by CABT, March 2024

H.R. 7496, the Modernizing Operations for Vehicles in Emergencies Act (MOVE Act), is an attempt to increase truck weights throughout the country, endangering motorists and damaging our roads and bridges.

This bill would allow any governor to unilaterally raise interstate weights for emergencies and "other unusual conditions" leading to a nationwide patchwork of truck weights, making a national weight increase inevitable. Most concerning, this bill would give governors the authority to increase interstate trucks weights based on an open-ended definition of supply chain disruptions.

This would be a flawed national policy that removes interstate weight limits from the jurisdiction of Congress.

H.R. 7496 has:

- No maximum weight limit
- No requirement for additional axles
- No limitation on number of renewals of declaration
- No additional safety requirements
- No additional funding for infrastructure
- No requirement for these trucks to abide by the Federal Bridge Formula
- No checks and balances on governors' authority

Existing law already allows for emergency weight increases. Current federal statute allows for temporary interstate truck weight increases in response to emergencies.[1]

This bill is not about emergencies, it's a weight increase in disguise. In addition to granting authority to all governors, this bill includes supply chain issues as a justification to raise weight, including slow movement, traffic congestion or "otherwise". This open-ended definition is a backdoor to the widespread operation of heavier trucks that special interests have long advocated for.

[1] 23 U.S. Code § 127

More danger for motorists. The 2016 USDOT study which recommended against truck size or weight increases found serious concerns with heavier trucks:

- **Higher crash rates:** Heavier trucks were found to have 47-400% higher crash rates in limited state testing.[2]
- **Longer stopping distances:** With no requirement for additional axles, this legislation would lead to more weight with the same number of brakes. This causes a dangerous increase in stopping distances.[3]
- **Increased wear and tear:** The study also found 18% higher brake violation rates and higher out of service violation rates for trucks exceeding 80,000 pounds.[4] This is especially important because a 2016 study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that trucks with any out-of-service violation are 362 percent more likely to be involved in a crash.[5]
- **More severe crashes:** The severity of a crash is determined by the velocity and mass of a vehicle. If its weight increases, so does the potential severity of a crash. Any increase in crash severity increases the likelihood of injuries becoming more serious or resulting in fatalities.

Heavier trucks crush infrastructure, taxpayers foot the bill. This bill would increase damage to interstate highways, as well as state and local roads. No truck trip starts and stops on the interstate, and local roads will inevitably be used. As this bill lacks additional funding for infrastructure, taxpayers would be forced to cover the cost. There are severe concerns with infrastructure:

- **More pavement damage:** With no requirement for additional axles, axle weights increase which causes an exponential increase in damage to pavement.[6]
- **More bridge damage:** The USDOT found billions in costs associated with interstate operation, [7] but research on local bridges has found as much as 83,455 bridges nationwide that could not handle weights of 97,000 pounds, with a total replacement cost of $78.4 billion.[8]
- **More spending:** Whether this damage takes place on the interstate or on state and local roads, taxpayers will end up footing the bill for a governor's unilateral decision to increase truck weights.

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[2] USDOT; 2016. *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, Final Report to Congress*
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Insurance Institute for Highway Safety; 2016. *Crash Risk Factors for Interstate Large Trucks in North Carolina*
[6] USDOT; 2016. *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, Final Report to Congress*
[7] Ibid.
[8] Bailey, Harvill et al; 2023. *The Impacts of Heavier Trucks on Local Bridges*