

Heavier Log Truck Bill Would Endanger Motorists and Damage Infrastructure

Prepared by CABT, March 2025

H.R. 2166 and S. 1063 would dramatically expand the roads on which extra-heavy log trucks are allowed to operate in at least 20 states. These bills would replace the current national uniform interstate gross vehicle weight limit of 80,000 pounds with whatever each individual state allows on its state roads. The new weight limits would vary by state and very few of the states would have the same limits. The new limits would range from 84,000 pounds on five axles to 156,000 pounds on eight axles. There is nothing in the bill to address the dangers caused by the extra weight like rollover risk and longer stopping distances. There is no requirement in the bill for extra axles to mitigate the additional pavement damage caused by heavier trucks. Nothing is provided to protect interstate bridges from the extra stress created by heavier trucks; in some cases, even the Federal Bridge Formula would be violated.¹

A patchwork approach to truck weight limits such as proposed in this legislation has been consistently opposed by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)² which recommended in 2016 against any change in federal truck size and weight laws.³ The bill would also violate the longstanding federal LCV freeze⁴ by allowing heavier, multi-trailer trucks on the interstates.

This bill **would not get heavier trucks off local roads**. No trip starts and stops on the interstate highway, and with higher allowed weights, the log trucks that currently operate at the legal limit of 80,000 pounds to utilize the interstate would run at the new, heavier weight. The end result is a higher frequency of heavier trucks on all roads.

Heavy Log Trucks Increase Dangers

- **Roll over.** Log trucks experienced rollover in 21% of fatal crashes, nearly twice the average for large trucks.⁵
- **Older average age of vehicles.** Log trucks had the oldest average age (17 years) of any class of truck involved in fatal crashes compared to an average of 9.2 years for all trucks.⁶
- **Severe crashes.** Log trucks are more likely to be involved in crashes resulting in fatalities and injuries. In 2021, vehicles in log truck crashes were 68% more likely to be involved in a fatality and 26% more likely to be involved in an injury when compared to crashes involving other big trucks.⁷

¹ FHWA; 2015. Compilation of Existing State Truck Size and Weight Limit Laws

² U.S. Department of Transportation; 2004. Western Uniformity Scenario Analysis, pg. ES-11

³ U.S. Department of Transportation; 2016. Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Final Report to Congress, pg. 21

⁴ 23 CFR § 658.23

⁵ FMCSA. Analysis & Information Online- Crash Statistics. FARS Database 2021

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

- **Longer stopping distances.** Adding weight without additional braking capacity increases stopping distance⁸, potentially turning a near-miss into a fatal crash.

Heavier Log Trucks Would Cause Significant Infrastructure Damage

- **More weight on same number of axles.** Many states would allow increased weights without increasing the number of axles. Compared to an 80,000-pound truck, a vehicle with a weight of 84,000 pounds increases pavement damage by 25%, while a 90,000-pound truck would do 73% more damage.⁹
- **Interstate bridges are already in dire need of repair.** Of the 147,439 bridges on the National Highway System, over 56% are rated as being in fair or poor condition.¹⁰ Adding significantly heavier trucks, some of which would violate the Federal Bridge Formula, would dramatically increase infrastructure damage.
- **Taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize the logging industry.** While logging companies may increase their profits by operating heavier log trucks, taxpayers will be forced to pick up the tab for the additional damage to roads and bridges caused by the extra-heavy trucks.

Commodity-specific Piecemeal Approach Sets Bad Precedent

“I think it’s a strain on our roadways and it certainly opens the floodgates for every other industry. I think they’d have a hard time holding the line to pass this for one specific industry and not have others follow suit.”

Statement by Iowa county engineer Ben Hull, discussing a bill to raise timber truck weights as reported in The Hawk Eye, Burlington, IA, April 24, 2019

- **Allowing one overweight commodity sets a bad precedent.** Piecemeal legislation sets the stage for future requests, where Congress is forced to favor or disadvantage specific industries.
- **Sets the stage for a nationwide increase.** As more exemptions are passed, a more complicated patchwork is created that would fuel calls for nationwide weight increases, with devastating consequences for public safety and infrastructure.

⁸ U.S. Department of Transportation; 2015. Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study Highway Safety and Truck Crash Comparative Analysis Technical Report, pg. 65

⁹ FHWA PaveDAT Model

¹⁰ FHWA; 2024. Bridge Condition by Highway System 2024