

February 9, 2016

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chair
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster and Ranking Member DeFazio:

As representatives of the public health and safety communities and families whose loved ones have been killed in preventable commercial motor vehicle crashes, we are writing to express our strong opposition to Section 611 of H.R. 4441, the Aviation Innovation Reform Reauthorization Act of 2016 (AIRR). Driver fatigue is a major and deadly problem within the trucking industry and this provision is a step backwards.

The provision preempts state laws that ensure drivers are afforded needed rest and meal breaks. Truck driver fatigue is a known safety problem that has been identified in National Transportation Safety Board, government and independent studies as well as by truck drivers themselves in surveys. Truck driving is consistently documented as one of the most dangerous occupations. It is reprehensible that truck safety rules are under attack in this aviation reform bill when large truck crashes are responsible for killing nearly 4,000 people and injuring 100,000 more annually. This Committee would never tolerate including any measure to repeal or weaken any rule or law affecting rest periods of commercial pilots and neither should it jeopardize the safety of commercial drivers and motorists on our roads and highways.

Special trucking interests are relentless in their attacks on federal truck driver hours of service rules. This provision will contribute to the damage inflicted by other anti-safety actions already taken by Congress to benefit special corporate trucking interests at the expense of safety. Included in this offensive is suspension of the requirement for two nights off duty as part of the 34-hour restart rule, allowing employers to push drivers to work as much as 80 hours per week.

Not only will Section 611 of the AIRR Act preempt state labor laws and worker protections, but it will also inappropriately inject Congress in an issue that is being litigated in the courts right now and overturn numerous previous judicial decisions.

Similar language was rejected last December during consideration of the FAST Act (Public Law 114-94) and should now be rejected in H.R. 4441, the AIRR Act.

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Gillan
President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Joan Claybrook
Chair
Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways

Daphne Izer
Co-Founder
Parents Against Tired Truckers

Andrew McGuire
Executive Director
Trauma Foundation