



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 11, 2015**

**CONTACT: Shane Reese, 919.339.3785**

**While large trucking companies lobby for bigger semitrailers, National Troopers Coalition chairman points to poll showing three of four Americans oppose increases**

**Minneapolis, Minn.**—While major trucking companies lobby Congress to allow longer and heavier semitrailers, a just-released poll found that three of four Americans oppose longer and heavier semitrailer trucks on the highway.

“Speaking on behalf of the over 45,000 members of the National Troopers Coalition, I can tell you that law enforcement officers have known for quite some time that bigger trucks threaten highway safety, and this poll shows that the public knows it, too,” said National Troopers Coalition Chairman Mat Hodapp, a Minnesota state trooper.

The Coalition Against Bigger Trucks, a nonprofit advocacy group that opposes truck size and weight increases, commissioned the live-operator survey of 1,000 nationwide respondents. The poll was conducted January 5-8, 2015, and had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

On Capitol Hill, groups composed of some of the nation’s largest and most powerful trucking and shipping interests are lobbying Congress to lift the 1991 federal freeze on longer combination vehicles (LCVs)—triple-trailer trucks and long double-trailer trucks. Other proposals include heavier single-trailer trucks that are up to 97,000 pounds—more than 8 tons heavier than today’s 80,000-pound weight limit.

At the same time, large trucking companies such as Con-Way Freight, Old Dominion Freight Line and FedEx are pushing legislation to require every state to permit even longer double trailer trucks. Their proposal would lengthen current double 28-foot trucks by 10 feet to double 33-foot trucks. Often referred to as “Twin 33s,” double 33-foot trucks are 17-feet longer than the standard 53-foot trucks on many roads today.

The nationwide survey, conducted by Harrisburg, Pennsylvania-based Harper Polling, found that 76 percent of respondents oppose longer and heavier semitrailer trucks on the highway, while 15 percent support them and 9 percent are unsure.

“This nationwide poll illustrates that motorists clearly do not want to be flanked by longer or heavier tractor-trailers on the highway, and that goes for Republicans and Democrats alike,” said Brock McCleary, president of Harper Polling.

The trend was largely consistent across political identification, region, age and gender. Also, respondents seem concerned with elected officials who support truck size and weight increases: 57 percent of respondents said they are less likely to vote for a candidate for Congress who supports longer and heavier trucks.

Opponents of heavier and longer trucks, including law enforcement and first responder organizations, are asking constituents to call their respective U.S. Representative and Senators and urge them to vote against any increase in truck size or weight limits.

“As a state trooper, I’ve always promised to keep public safety as my top priority,” said Hodapp. “For over 20 years, I’ve committed myself to stopping the expansion of bigger trucks. There’s nothing safe about them on our highways. Congress should listen to law enforcement and the public on this.”

A 2013 independent study led by Marshall University found that 95 percent of law enforcement officers surveyed believe that adding more weight makes a truck more dangerous. The same study found that 88 percent of truck drivers surveyed say that greater use of longer-combination vehicles would negatively impact highway safety.

“We’ve heard both sides of this issue, and our position remains the same—there’s no justification for longer or heavier trucks,” Hodapp said. “Bigger-truck proponents talk about ‘modernizing’ our transportation policy, but I don’t think there is anything ‘modern’ about compromising public safety.”

The Harper poll found that 79 percent of respondents are very or somewhat convinced that heavier and longer trucks will lead to more braking problems and longer stopping distances, causing an increase in the number of accidents involving trucks. In 2006, a Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) report to Congress found that 29 percent of truck crashes involved some form of braking problem. Nearly one in five trucks had out-of-service violations during the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance’s Roadcheck 2014, and 46 percent of those trucks were placed out of service due to braking issues.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported earlier this month that highway fatalities from truck-involved crashes on U.S. roads rose for the fourth straight year, while overall number of vehicle-related fatalities declined in 2013.

“Bigger trucks mean more severe crashes and more lives lost,” said Hodapp. “Some trucking companies have a vested economic interest in the outcome of this legislation, but our interest as law enforcement officers is the safety of motorists.”

The U.S. Department of Transportation reviewed 30 years of research in 2013 and found that gross vehicle weight would appear to be associated with higher crash rates. The Department’s 2000 study found that multi-trailer trucks are already more dangerous than single-trailer trucks, and have an 11-percent higher fatal crash rate. The 2013 Marshall-led study published similar findings, concluding that double-trailer trucks have an 11-percent higher fatality rate than single-trailer trucks.

###

*CABT is a national, nonprofit grassroots organization with coalitions of nearly 5,000 local supporters in over 30 states. CABT supporters include law enforcement officers, local elected officials, truck drivers, motorists, safety and consumer groups, railroads and citizens groups. To learn more about the fight against bigger trucks, please visit [www.cabt.org](http://www.cabt.org).*