



AMERICANS SAY BIGGER TRUCKS THREATEN AMERICA'S ROADWAYS, GREATER TAXPAYER BURDEN

National Poll Shows Overwhelming Opposition to Bigger, Heavier Trucks That Would Endanger Motorists, Destroy America's Infrastructure, Cause Higher Taxes for Families

Washington, D.C. – April 20, 2011 – American voters say they are overwhelmingly opposed to allowing bigger, heavier trucks on our nation's highways, according to a national survey released today. Conducted by Hart Research Associates on behalf of the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks (CABT), the survey found public opinion is strongly against proposals being pushed by some large trucking companies asking Congress to raise the national cap on truck size by 20 percent to 97,000 pounds from the current limit of 80,000 pounds.

The survey found that voters "overwhelmingly and consistently oppose allowing bigger, heavier trucks on American highways," with nearly three quarters, or 72 percent, of registered voters opposing such an increase, and half of those surveyed, 49 percent, said that they strongly opposed the idea. The survey also found that the opposition stems from public concerns about the increased threat of accidents posed by heavier trucks, as well as increased highway damage, added traffic congestion and potential tax hikes to pay for highway damage.

"What we heard is that Americans simply don't want bigger, heavier trucks, because they're worried about the safety of these vehicles on the road," said CABT spokesperson Curtis Sloan. "Taxpayers also don't want to be left holding the bag when it comes time to pay for road damage."

The survey results are in line with what law enforcement officials, truck drivers, consumer groups and other transportation industries partnered with CABT have long asserted: heavier trucks mean longer stopping distances, the potential for more serious car accidents, and increased congestion on our nation's highways.

"Bigger trucks will mean bigger traffic problems and bigger risks to other drivers," said Sergeant Gary Chandler, President of the Texas Department of Public Safety Officers Association. "It's that simple."

Statistics from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) show that nationally, large trucks have a fatal crash rate nearly 40 percent higher than cars. Additionally, bigger trucks are more likely to roll over, and that the additional 20 percent increase in weight would cause more wear and tear on brakes, suspension and tires. These considerations are part of the reason that truck drivers are also speaking out against proposals to allow bigger trucks.

"We already have a serious lack of training for truckers and virtually no minimum standards for a person to get a commercial drivers license. It's a hard enough job to maneuver 80,000 pounds and no one knows better than the men and women who drive trucks for a living that heavier trucks can reduce safety margins for themselves and other motorists. Most want no part of increasing the weight limit, either as drivers or even as motorists sharing the road," said Todd Spencer, Executive Vice President of the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association.

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“There remain significant unanswered questions regarding the balance between productivity, safety and impacts on infrastructure,” stated Chris Plaushin, AAA director of federal relations. “Until research can fully address these issues, AAA remains opposed to any federal increases in the current truck size and weight limits.”

The U.S. DOT estimates that taxpayers already subsidize nearly \$2 billion annually for large truck damage, and bigger trucks would make that worse. The most common truck on the road—an 80,000 pound five-axle single—pays just 80 percent of the maintenance costs it inflicts on roads, while a 97,000-pound six-axle single truck would pay for only half of its damage.

“Bigger trucks would mean bigger taxpayer-funded bridge and road repair subsidies which trucks have enjoyed for decades,” said Association of American Railroads spokesperson Patricia Reilly. “With all the pressure to trim federal and state transportation budgets, we need to put less – not more—pressure on taxpayers and our national transportation infrastructure.”

Proponents of bigger, heavier trucks argue that increasing truck size will lead to less roadway gridlock, but empirical evidence suggests otherwise. Past increases in truck size have not resulted in fewer trucks, fewer trips, or fewer miles traveled, and the number of trucks on U.S. highways has consistently grown even after increases in the size of large trucks. A 2010 study commissioned by CABT concluded that raising truck weight from 80,000 pounds to 97,000 pounds could actually result in 8 million additional truckloads on America’s highways. This increased gridlock only adds to the concerns opponents have about the safety of bigger trucks.

“Increasing truck weights doesn’t mean fewer trucks on the road; it just means bigger trucks,” said CABT’s Sloan. “It’s bad for the economy, it’s bad for our infrastructure, and it’s bad for American families.”

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About CABT: CABT is a national, non-profit grassroots organization with coalitions of nearly 5,000 local supporters in over 30 states. CABT local 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.