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**CONTACT: Scott Bohn, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association -** [**sbohn@pachiefs.org**](mailto:sbohn@pachiefs.org) **(717) 236-1059  ext. 108**

***PCPA Executive Director: Allowing Bigger Truck Loopholes Dangerous for Commonwealth Motorists***

**Harrisburg, PA**— The Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police (PCPA) has had a long-standing policy opposing increases in truck size and weight, whether at the federal or state level. The primary cause for concern is the increased risk to motorists on our roads, but we are also concerned about the additional damage to our roads and bridges, which could compound safety problems as well. To be clear, this doesn’t mean only Interstate Highways and Turnpikes would be affected. These bigger trucks would impact our state highways and even a multitude of local roads that carry truck traffic into our smaller boroughs and townships.

“Law enforcement professionals across the Commonwealth are opposed with proposals to put even heavier, more dangerous trucks on our roads,” said Scott Bohn, Executive Director of PCPA. “To our members, this is just common sense. Regardless of what type of cargo is being transported, allowing even heavier trucks on our roads is a recipe for disaster. Heavier weights have been associated with increased braking violations, higher likelihood of rolling over, and more severe crashes, to name a few concerns.”

Lobbyists and special interest groups have been pressuring lawmakers for years to allow heavier maximum truck weights for preferred industries and commodities. Recently, PCPA was given the opportunity to provide input to stakeholders in Harrisburg on law enforcement concerns regarding the negative safety impacts related to heavier trucks on roads in Pennsylvania. PCPA has reiterated their opposition to such increases. Currently, there are *twenty* existing exemptions for various commodities in Pennsylvania allowing weights well over the statewide 80,000 pound maximum.

This isn’t confined to the debate in Harrisburg. Last week on Capitol Hill, the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure passed the INVEST in America Act, which will create a much-overdue framework for funding for our nation’s surface highways and other critical infrastructure. While any major exemptions have to date been left out of the amendment process, various proponents of bigger truck legislation are poised to potentially bring these up again for the full floor vote currently scheduled for June 30. Two key examples of these bigger truck proposed amendments include a significant weight increase for logging trucks as well as for auto-haul trucks.

Whether these loopholes are being created at the federal or state level, they not only add more dangerous trucks to the road industry-by-industry, they create a complicated patchwork of regulations that make it very difficult for law enforcement and other motor carrier inspectors to enforce, especially given an era of shrinking departmental budgets.

“While most in law enforcement understand the need to move goods quickly and efficiently around the country at a low cost, we also have to keep in mind the costs associated with more accidents on the road and more police time spent responding to them.” said Mr. Bohn. “Not to mention, every time a member of law enforcement is sent out to the scene of an accident on the highway, we are also putting their lives at risk. Continuing the process legislatively of adding additional commodities at heavier trucks weights will eventually lead to a slippery slope that could culminate in a de-facto statewide truck weight increase and eventually, a blanket increase across the nation.   
  
At the request of Congress, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) conducted a study on truck size and weight limits and published its results last year. USDOT’s Final Report to Congress [recommended that no changes be made to current truck size and weight laws](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/sw/map21tswstudy/ctsw/ctswls_rtc_2016.pdf).

On the issue of weight, the 2016 report from USDOT found in limited state testing that heavier trucks had significantly higher crash rates: 91,000-pound trucks were [47 percent higher](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/sw/map21tswstudy/technical_rpts/hstcanalysis.pdf), and 97,000-pound trucks were [99 to 400 percent higher](https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/sw/map21tswstudy/technical_rpts/hstcanalysis.pdf) than trucks weighing 80,000 pounds.

In summary, Mr. Bohn noted, “Allowing more and more commodities to pile onto the long list of those that are already running at heavier weights, whether in the Commonwealth or nationally, is bad public policy that will put our motorists, law enforcement and infrastructure at even greater risk”.



Scott L. Bohn, Executive Director

Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association