



State-legal Loads On the Interstate System

The Right to Haul Act

Individual states have long set weight limits for their roads and highways. With the advent of the Dwight D. Eisenhower System of Interstate and Defense Highways (Interstate system) the Federal Government established its own weight limits for this system. Thirteen states have received various exemptions from these limits. Transit buses and fire and other disaster response vehicles have temporary exemptions pending studies of their weight and use, and many “new” sections of the federal Interstate Highway system have been “grandfathered” in to allow the existing state legal load limits prior to the roadway becoming a portion of the Federal Interstate Highway System.

Generally, Title 23, Section 127(a), U.S. Code sets Interstate System weight limits at 20,000 pounds on a single axle; 34,000 pounds on tandems and a gross weight of 80,000 pounds on a 36 foot tandem spread. A bridge formula is used to recognize different axle spreads. These maximums include enforcement tolerances.

Based on safety considerations, the American Loggers Council (ALC) is proposing an additional exemption for agricultural (including forest) commodity loads that meet state-legal requirements and tolerances. The exemption is expected to result in a shift of a substantial amount of existing trip mileage from two-lane secondary roads and highways to the Interstate System and result in nominally fewer trips – and improves safety for the motoring public, including the trucks themselves. This proposal would also “fix” the issue with the addition of “newly” designated federal interstate highways having to receive piecemeal exemptions based on existing State weight tolerances.

Language introduced in the 113th Congress titled the “Right to Haul Act of 2014, H.R, 5201” included:

Amending Title 23, Chapter 1, Subchapter I, Section 127(a), United States Code, by adding the following final paragraph:

“(j) State Agricultural Exemptions. –

“(1) IN GENERAL. – Notwithstanding subsection (a), individual State weight limitations for an agricultural commodity that are applicable to State highways shall be applicable to the Interstate System within the State’s borders for vehicles carrying an agricultural commodity.

“(2) AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY DEFINED.—The term ‘agricultural commodity’ means any agricultural commodity (including horticulture, aquaculture, and floriculture), food, feed, fiber, forestry products, livestock (including elk, reindeer, bison, horses, or deer), or insects, and any other product thereof.”

For assistance regarding this proposal, please contact Danny Dructor, American Loggers Council, (409) 625-0206.