



NEWS CONFERENCE STATEMENT OF CLYDE POLICE CHIEF BRUCE GOWER

April 9, 2013

Good morning. I am Bruce Gower, Chief of Police for the city of Clyde, Ohio. I have served as the city's police chief for the past 18 years, and as a police officer for 35 years.

Today I am speaking on behalf of the Ohio Association of Chiefs of Police and its nearly 800 members in the state of Ohio. I am here today with law enforcement officers from 16 states who have come to Washington to tell Congress we do not want bigger trucks on our roads. I don't know of a single law enforcement officer who thinks that bigger trucks would make our roads safer.

During my three-plus decades of law enforcement, I have been on the scene of hundreds of crashes involving big rigs. Although Clyde is a small town of about 6,500 people, we have an industrial base and we are home to the world's largest washing-machine manufacturer. More than 500 trucks hauling steel, hazardous materials and other cargo run through our town every day. We see more than our share of truck crashes and many of them have been horrific, heartbreaking scenes. Because the big rigs are so massive, when trucks and cars collide the consequences are very serious. We shouldn't do anything to add to those dangers. Adding extra weight to big rigs or making them longer and adding trailers will definitely make them more dangerous. Hit something with a five-pound sledgehammer, it's going to do so much damage. Hit something with a forty-pound sledgehammer, it's going to do a lot more damage. For me, it's a matter of simple physics. Heavier weights traveling at high speeds mean an increase in crash severity, putting motorists in Ohio and across the country in even more danger.

Let me be clear: We are not here to place responsibility on truck drivers. In fact, it's been my experience that the vast majority of truck drivers are skilled, careful and deliberate—and they take their jobs seriously. This is an issue of vehicles that are inherently dangerous, and we do not want to make them any more dangerous by adding to their weight or length.

Now, as to the study being done by the U.S. Department of Transportation, there are two points I want to make. First, the vital information that police officers can provide is not being included in the study. Computer simulations and laboratory tests alone are not enough. Real world data is available and can be collected from the law enforcement officers who inspect these trucks and investigate their crashes every day. To ignore the professional experience of state troopers, deputy sheriffs and police officers makes no sense to me.

Second, it is essential that the USDOT study look carefully at the impact of the bigger trucks on the local roads and bridges and the local communities like Clyde. Most truck trips begin and end on a local road. The local roads are older, they are built to a lower standard, and they are in

worse condition than the federal roads. These roads and bridges must be studied because the impact of the bigger trucks would be more severe than on the federal roads. As someone who patrols local roads every day, I can tell you that the 80,000-pound trucks operating today have pretty well devastated our roads and bridges. They simply could not handle heavier trucks.

I was traveling north on the Ohio Turnpike just a few days ago, and I got behind one of these triple-trailer trucks. I can tell you as an eyewitness that the “crack-the-whip” effect is real. As the wind picked up, the two rear-most trailers of the truck were snaking in its traffic lane and the rear-most trailer swept into my lane by at least two feet. I don’t want triple-trailer trucks coming anywhere near my town. *For the press here today, we have footage available of a similar triple-trailer truck experiencing this “crack-the-whip” effect.*

Here’s the bottom line for me: Those companies that want the heavier and longer rigs talk about “modernizing” our transportation policy. But there is nothing “modern” about compromising the safety of the American public. It’s time we put the safety of motorists ahead of large trucking companies making a few extra bucks.

We’re lobbying against bigger trucks because we patrol the roads, and we’re trying to keep our communities safe. We know from real-world, day-to-day experience that bigger trucks are bad news for motorists.

Thank you.