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Truck Crash Survivor and Highway Safety Advocate Urges Rep. Rick Nolan (D-MN) to Give the Ax to Minnesota Overweight Log Trucks Amendment

House Committee Transportation Bill Already Rife With Dangerous Trucking Provisions as U.S. Traffic Deaths are on the Rise in 2015

**STATEMENT OF NANCY MEULENERS
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(BLOOMINGTON, M.N.) After joining truck crash survivors and family and friends of truck crash victims to advocate for truck safety improvements on Capitol Hill this week, it was shocking to learn that a dangerous trucking provision is being pushed for my home state. I urge Congressman Rick Nolan (D-MN) to drop his amendment and halt his pursuit of 99,000 lbs. log trucks on a section of Minnesota I-35 when the U.S. House of Representatives takes up consideration of its transportation bill, *The Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2015* (STRR), H.R. 3763. Right now, Rep. Nolan's amendment is on hold. Meanwhile, it appears that there will be numerous back room deals cut to benefit special trucking interests before the bill comes up for a floor vote, which could happen as early as next week and this could be one of them.

A life-long Minnesotan, I survived a horrific truck crash that left me permanently disfigured. As a result of my own experience, as well as those of my fellow truck safety advocates, I know first-hand about the dangers of sharing roadways with trucks and about the increase in risks and damages when those trucks are bigger and heavier. I urge Congressman Nolan to reconsider his actions. While his amendment is touted to improve safety by removing behemoth log and pulp trucks from Duluth's local roads, it will instead expand their range to I-35. There is nothing to prevent them from continuing to drive down main streets.

In Minnesota truck crash fatalities increased the last two years according to data available from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA); a 15 percent increase from 2011 to 2012, and 25 percent increase from 2012 to 2013. Seventy five Minnesotans were needlessly killed in large truck crashes in 2013, ensuring a lifetime of grief for their families and friends.

Truck crashes impose enormous economic costs on society; the annual cost to society from crashes involving commercial motor vehicles is estimated to be over \$103 billion. I have undergone nearly 40 surgeries to repair major injuries after my truck crash. I can personally attest to the economic burden of large medical costs and loss of income that Minnesota families bear when a truck crash occurs. Congressman Nolan's amendment to increase the range for overweight log trucks in Minnesota is not a safety solution but a safety setback for our families.

My fellow truck safety advocates and I stand together in calling on Members of the Minnesota congressional delegation to put the safety of our loved ones first and not special trucking interests. Rather than offering dangerous amendments we hope that Rep. Nolan will work to continue the legislative legacy of former Rep. Jim Oberstar who championed highway and truck safety. We urge him to work to strip anti-truck safety provisions from the STRR that will permit teen truckers to drive across the country, hide the safety scores of unsafe truck and bus companies, hinder the DOT from increasing minimum insurance requirements for motor carriers, stall safety rulemaking by imposing unnecessary burdens, and permit the U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to extend its deadlines on long overdue safety rules.

Additionally, we adamantly oppose any provisions in the bill to increase truck size and weight limits at home in Minnesota or nationwide. The recent U.S. DOT Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study concluded

there is a “profound” lack of data from which to quantify the safety impact of larger or heavier trucks and consequently recommends that no changes in the relevant truck size and weight laws and regulations be considered until data limitations are overcome.

We are not alone in our concerns. Public opinion is with us. By overwhelming margins in numerous public opinion polls over the last 20 years, the American public consistently and convincingly rejects sharing the road with bigger, heavier and longer trucks. The most recent poll in January 2015 by Harper Polling revealed that 76% of respondents oppose longer and heavier trucks on the highways and 79% 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 crashes involving trucks.

Every year on average, 4,000 people are killed nationally in truck-involved crashes and 100,000 are injured. We cannot continue to ignore these intolerable losses and injuries. A national surface transportation authorization bill should not be a legislative vehicle to pass special interest provisions that would never be supported by the public or pass scrutiny. Yet, this bill is chock-full of truck safety rollbacks that throw the safety agenda into reverse and further endanger everyone on the roads. I urge Congressman Nolan to work with us and seek sensible safety solutions to this public health and safety epidemic.

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