

Statement of Lee Jackson

Hello, my name is Lee Jackson. I am a truck crash reconstructionist, a retired law enforcement officer, and a truck crash survivor.

Throughout my professional life, I have seen many different crashes over the years. Those involving trucks are the most destructive and damaging. Increasing truck size and weight will lead to more devastating crashes, resulting in even more deaths and injuries. I am not alone in thinking this. According to a 2013 study conducted by the Multimodal Transportation and Infrastructure Consortium (MTIC), police officers nearly unanimously indicated that longer and heavier trucks would be more dangerous because the additional length and weight would add new factors to an already complicated chain of events.

Increasing the length of double tractor-trailers from 28 feet per trailer to 33 feet per trailer, a configuration also referred to as a Double 33, would have serious consequences for public safety. These longer trucks require an additional 22 feet to stop. This will not be safer for the men and women who work on our roads every day in work zones and construction zones, especially considering that 27 percent of all fatal work zone crashes involve a large truck.

Double 33s could top 90 feet in length – which is equivalent to an 8-story office building on its side. These massive trucks have serious safety problems. For starters, double trailer trucks have an 11 percent higher fatal crash rate than single trailer trucks. They take more time to pass, swing into opposing lanes on curves and right-angle turns, and result in more incursions into other lanes of traffic. Further, the length would make passing and merging more difficult and would increase the size of the truck's blind spot.

A broad coalition representing law enforcement, first responders, truck drivers, trucking companies, consumer, public health and safety groups, rail interests and truck crash victims and families are united in opposition to this major national policy change, which the Senate soundly defeated less than two years ago. The public has also spoken loud and clear in numerous public opinion polls that they do not want to share the road with bigger and heavier trucks.

Another dangerous and misguided proposal that the House of Representatives rejected in the last Congress was increasing the federal truck weight limit. A study done by the U.S. Department of Transportation found that heavier trucks have substantially higher crash rates. The study also found that heavier trucks have higher rates of brake violations compared to lighter trucks, which is a common reason for higher out-of-service violations. And, in 2016, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) concluded that a truck with any out-of-service violations is 362 percent more likely to be involved in a crash.

I want to now call your attention to a report released this morning by the Truck Safety Coalition that ranks the most dangerous states for truck crashes using the measure of truck deaths per 1,000,000 population. Here are the top 20 most dangerous states: #1 North Dakota, #2 Wyoming, #3 Oklahoma, #4 Mississippi, #5 Arkansas, #6 South Carolina, #7 Kansas, #8 New Mexico, #9 Nebraska, #10 Alabama, followed by Texas, Iowa, Montana, Kentucky, Georgia, Indiana, Tennessee, Missouri, Idaho and Louisiana.

We hope these facts and fatality rate figures grab the attention of lawmakers. Increasing the length and weight of trucks or weakening existing truck safety laws should be off the table. Instead, this data should spur action on the many policies mentioned today to improve public safety and to curb the carnage that I see all-too-often on our roads. Thank you.