



June 26, 2009

An Open Letter House Members: Support H.R. 1799, a Real Infrastructure “Stimulus” that Won’t Burden Taxpayers!

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 362,000-member National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I urge you to cosponsor and vote for H.R. 1799, the “Safe and Efficient Transportation Act of 2009.” Unlike all too many proposals in Congress, this legislation would improve the productivity of the nation’s infrastructure without massive infusions of tax dollars.

Often lost in the debate over surface transportation policy is the potential to make better use of existing assets. This is why H.R. 1799 is a breath of fresh air in an often rarefied atmosphere of pork-barrel spending projects, fuel-tax increases, and misplaced priorities that has permeated Washington. The Safe and Efficient Transportation Act would afford each state the option to raise truck-weight limits on Interstate Highways within their jurisdictions, from the current 80,000 pounds (five axles) to as much as 97,000 pounds (six axles).

This seemingly minor regulatory reform could actually deliver major benefits. In the next 15 years, road congestion from trucks could increase dramatically as the amount of freight they haul is expected to double or triple. Permitting greater weights would ease this problem by obviating part of the need for more trucks on the road. Moreover, the addition of a sixth axle for the heavier loads would offset the road wear that might normally occur due to the extra stress on the pavement.

For industries that depend on highways to ship their goods, the savings in fuel, labor, and logistical costs from the bill would be considerable – especially at a time when many companies are struggling to survive, much less improve their profit margins. H.R. 1799 would also enhance America’s global competitiveness by bringing truck-weight limits more in line with our neighbors to the North and South (as well as those across the Atlantic).

Finally, for those seeking reductions in carbon dioxide emissions without enacting punitive, destructive carbon taxes or cap-and-trade schemes, H.R. 1799 readily answers to the purpose. One food-production firm recently estimated that annual fuel savings of 6.6 million gallons (and consequently 73,000 fewer tons of CO₂) could be achieved for its operations alone by this simple legislation.

It may seem strange for a grassroots taxpayer organization to so enthusiastically advocate for a bill pertaining to truck-weight limitations. Yet it is precisely legislation such as this which can break federal economic and transportation policy out of a cycle dominated by a tax-borrow-and-spend mentality.

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NTU Endorsement of H.R. 1799, Continued ...

Ideally, the salutary policy prescriptions in H.R. 1799 would come without the “sweetener” of a bridge improvement fund created by higher fees. After all, with the aforementioned axle addition and the prospect of lower truck-traffic growth, the bill’s net effect would likely benefit bridges without any further expenditures.

Nonetheless, H.R. 1799 certainly holds more promise to help our economy over the near- and long term than the approach of carpet-bombing the country with deficit-financed dollars through the atrocious \$787 billion “stimulus” bill.

If lawmakers wish to pass stand-alone legislation with “ready-to-go” economic recovery potential, H.R. 1799 is the genuine article. NTU looks forward to helping Congress enact this thoughtful bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pete Sepp", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Pete Sepp
Vice President for Policy and Communications