



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON DC 20590

October 19, 2011

The Honorable Kelly A. Ayotte  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Ayotte:

Since coming into office, my single highest priority has been transportation safety. Americans expect safe travel each and every day, particularly when it comes to the operation of big trucks. Last year, nearly 4,000 people died in crashes involving large trucks and, by our estimates, approximately 500 of those deaths involved an overly tired commercial driver.

This Administration is in the final stages of issuing a final rule that will address the critical safety issues of the rules governing work hours for professional truck drivers. I learned yesterday, however, that you may introduce an amendment prohibiting the use of Federal funds "to finalize, enforce, or implement the hours-of-service regulations proposed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration on December 29, 2010." In the interest of highway safety, I urge you not to introduce this amendment.

The amendment would prevent the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration from applying the most comprehensive and up-to-date data and analysis to the issue of driver fatigue and allowable hours of service. Fatigue on our Nation's highways is a very serious concern and affects everyone who shares the roads with the trucking industry. Beginning in 2009, the Department implemented a comprehensive plan of action to tackle the issue of driver fatigue in a transparent fashion through research, listening sessions, and the Federal rulemaking process. The final rule, if put in jeopardy, potentially undermines the entire regulatory process. In fact, some sectors of the trucking industry could be granted new operational flexibility under the proposed rule when finalized. Any disruption in this regulatory process would sacrifice these benefits and create confusion and uncertainty among State and Federal enforcement officials, as well as within the motor carrier industry.

As I am sure you will agree, tired truckers have no place on our Nation's roads. Therefore, I call upon you to allow the Department to complete its open and transparent rulemaking process designed to ensure that truck drivers are rested, alert, and focused on safety while on the job. We must do all we can to protect the traveling public and save lives. Our citizens deserve no less.

If I can provide further information or assistance, please feel free to call me.

Sincerely yours,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Ray LaHood'. The signature is written over the typed name 'Ray LaHood'.

Ray LaHood