

TEAMSTERS NEWS

International Brotherhood

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For Immediate Release
May 16, 2011

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HOFFA: THE PUBLIC OPPOSES ILLEGAL, UNSAFE MEXICAN TRUCK PROGRAM

Teamsters Union Submits Comments to Federal Register

(WASHINGTON) – Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa today said the U.S. Department of Transportation should listen to the American public and not open the border to dangerous Mexican trucks because of concerns about job loss, border security, highway safety and the legality of the program itself.

Teamsters and other Americans submitted more than a thousand comments opposing the DOT plan to open the border during the 30-day comment period in the Federal Register, which ended Friday. The comments posted were overwhelmingly against letting Mexican trucks travel freely on U.S. highways. Only groups representing multinational corporations and agribusiness supported DOT's proposal.

"I urge Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood to listen to his conscience and to the vast majority of Americans, not to corporate interests that have no loyalty to the United States," Hoffa said. "He should show that the democratic process works by pulling the plug on this program."

The Teamsters Union also formally submitted comments Friday. Hoffa said DOT's proposal to open the border "fails to adequately protect our members, their families and the traveling public from the potential danger of unsafe Mexican trucks and drivers, who do not meet or will not adhere to all U.S. safety standards."

(MORE)

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Further, Hoffa said the proposal is illegal because it violates Section 6901 of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Act of 2007. That statute does not allow funds to be spent on a cross-border trucking program unless "simultaneous and comparable authority to operate within Mexico is made available to motor carriers domiciled in the United States."

Hoffa said the Mexican government is incapable of granting comparable authority under the current travel warning issued by the U.S. State Department on April 22. The State Department tells U.S. citizens to defer non-essential travel to Nogales and Northern Sonora; Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua; Durango, Coahuila and Zacatecas; Tamaulipas; Sinaloa and Southern Sonora; San Luis Potosi; Nayarit and Jalisco; and Michoacan.

"It is very clear that the safety of the U.S. drivers traveling into Mexico cannot be ensured, and therefore simultaneous and comparable authority is not made available to U.S. motor carriers under the pilot program," Hoffa said.

Hoffa also said the program threatens U.S. warehouse and truck driving jobs at a time of high unemployment. "It fails to protect our members and other U.S. workers from the loss of employment from both outright job displacement and inadequate enforcement of U.S. cabotage laws, potentially allowing Mexican drivers to deliver U.S. cargo point-to-point in the U.S., threatening the jobs of all U.S. commercial motor vehicle drivers."

The Obama administration closed the border to unsafe Mexican trucks in February 2009 after Congress shut off funds for the Bush administration's cross-border pilot program. Mexico retaliated with tariffs that are excessive. The Teamsters for two years have urged the administration to bring a challenge against Mexico for imposing excessive tariffs on U.S. goods instead of agreeing to open the border to unsafe trucks.

Founded in 1903, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters represents more than 1.4 million hard-working men and women in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico. Go to www.teamster.org for more information.