

PUBLIC HEARING – TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE 3/6/2009

Testimony submitted by:

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Support Governor's H.B. 6393

Good morning, Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrero and distinguished members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Glenn Terlecki and I am the Secretary/Treasurer of the Connecticut Police and Fire Union. I am also a 10-year veteran Inspector with the Department of Motor Vehicles. I come before you today to speak on behalf of Governor H.B. 6393. I am somewhat torn in different directions on this bill for many different reasons. On one side, I feel honored that Governor Rell has proposed that the DMV take control of all Connecticut's weight stations. She obviously knows how skilled and professional the DMV Inspectors are and what an outstanding job we do with commercial truck enforcement. On the other side, I wonder if the DMV could successfully handle such a proposal based on the staffing and funding recommendations that have been mentioned. One thing that I do know for sure is that my opinion in the grand scheme of things will not be the proverbial straw that broken the camels back for either side of the argument.

Since the mid 1980's the Department of Motor Vehicles has been Connecticut's lead agency in truck safety and enforcement. The main objective of our job is to reduce the number of traffic accidents and hazardous materials incidents involving commercial motor vehicles by removing unsafe trucks and unsafe drivers from Connecticut's roadways. We achieve this objective with three truck enforcement teams made up of between 5-8 Motor Vehicle Inspectors and a Sergeant. Our teams patrol Connecticut highways and secondary roads throughout the State and staff the weight station located along I-84 in the town of Union. We are all graduates of the Connecticut Police Academy and certified police officers with specialty training in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations. We enforce Connecticut's motor vehicle laws, make arrests, issue infractions, summons and warrants, testify in court, operate portable scales and patrol Connecticut's roadways in marked and un-marked police vehicles. Unfortunately, over the years, our staffing numbers have diminished due to retirements, layoffs and budget constraints on hiring, but our enforcement statistics have remained steady or have increased in some areas. We have seen an increase in the total number of inspections conducted in the past year and remain one of the top departments in the entire country for percentage of commercial vehicles and drivers placed out of service. We generated millions of dollars in fines each year and have one of the State's highest conviction rates for infractions in the State.

The cost to the State of Connecticut for the importance of what we do is minuscule. Federal grants fund much of the motor carrier safety program for the Department of Motor Vehicles. In order to receive such federal grants, the DMV must first meet certain objectives that involve State funding. Through maintenance of effort (MOE) the federal government expects the State of Connecticut to contribute a certain amount of money to commercial vehicle safety each year before the federal grants can be used. This MOE may include anything from portions of salaries for non-enforcement personnel, office staff who enter inspection reports, to State Troopers who perform safety inspections. Although smaller in number, the State Police generated inspections are a vital aspect in achieving our maintenance of effort.

I believe that this proposed bill could be a great success. For this to happen, the State of Connecticut would have to hire a significant number of Motor Vehicle Inspectors to replace the Troopers at the scales. The State would also have to make provisions that would ensure the DMV could maintain adequate roving patrol to continue truck safety on highways and secondary roads. The Connecticut Department of Transportation size and weight program must continue to be maintained through a combined effort or direct effort of the Connecticut State Police or Department of Motor Vehicles. The Connecticut State Police would continue to assist with truck enforcement and commercial motor vehicle related accident investigations.

In meeting the above requirements, I would take pride in the increased responsibilities as an Inspector with the Department of Motor Vehicle. Connecticut would also solidify its place at the top of all states in the nation for commercial motor vehicle safety and enforcement.