

Testimony of Trooper Matt Feest, Connecticut State Police:

Good morning. Thank you for allowing me to speak before you today. I am Trooper Matthew Feest. I have been a member of the Connecticut State Police since July of 1992. In 1998, I was assigned to the Connecticut State Police Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Unit, specifically tasked to do truck enforcement. Since my assignment, I have conducted thousands of truck inspections and have taken hundreds of drivers and vehicles off of our roadways for serious safety violations in order to make Connecticut's highways safer.

In a one year time period, I personally issued more than 1,500 infractions for speeding and safety violations on commercial vehicles on state roads. I conducted approximately 315 inspections which resulted in an estimated 50 percent out of service rating – which means approximately one of every two trucks that I inspected either had serious driver or equipment violations deeming the driver or the vehicle was unsafe for the road. That means the vehicle needs to be physically repaired prior to continuing on our roads. Some of my daily findings are fatigued drivers, some who have driven more than 24 hours straight without any rest, drivers who are not medically certified to operate commercial vehicles, defective break components, faulty steering mechanisms, and as simple, yet dangerous, as bald tires.

While the majority of our time is spent on our highways and state roads, it is not uncommon for one of our unit members to be called to assist a local police department when an accident involving a truck has occurred in their town. Our unit also works with local police departments proactively in troubled areas where truck traffic is prevalent and there is a fear of accidents. I was also personally assigned to the Avon Mountain area for six months as part of the Governor's initiative on truck enforcement. My assignment was part of a four trooper, five-town safety initiative, and during that time we found scores of unsafe trucks in the vicinity of Avon Mountain. I find it hard to believe that the results of this horrific accident are being forgotten so soon.

The state has invested tens of thousands of dollars in me alone, sending me to specialized training so I can inspect commercial vehicles carrying hazardous materials, radioactive loads, tanker vehicles, and motor coaches. Many of my fellow troopers in our unit have similar training in these areas. In an effort to keep our State safe from terrorist threats, our unit members carry and have been trained in equipment which can detect certain radiological materials. These skills will be lost if this unit is disbanded and the 21 troopers are sent back to basic patrol duties, as proposed.

There will be a vote concerning the Elimination of the State Police Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Unit coming before you on which I implore you to vote NO. This budget proposal will cost the state millions of dollars in lost commercial vehicle enforcement revenue, effectively cut in half the number of state employees who inspect, detect and deter dangerous commercial vehicles on our roadways, as well as help deter threats to homeland security which place your constituents at risk while travelling through Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and attention.