
OLR Bill Analysis

sSB 186

AN ACT ESTABLISHING WEIGHT TOLERANCE EXEMPTIONS FOR ELECTRIC COMMERCIAL VEHICLES AND CONCERNING THE REGISTRATION OF CERTAIN PICK-UP TRUCKS.

SUMMARY

This bill grants a weight tolerance exemption to primarily electric commercial motor vehicles driving on any road in the state, allowing them to exceed the state's various vehicle weight limits by up to 2,000 pounds. Among other things, this increases the general maximum gross weight for electric commercial vehicles from 80,000 pounds to 82,000 pounds. This exemption already applies to these vehicles when traveling on, or within reasonable access to, interstate highways (see BACKGROUND).

The bill also makes pick-up trucks with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 8,501 to 8,550 pounds eligible for a passenger registration if they are not used commercially. Currently, these pick-up trucks must be registered as combination vehicles. The bill's change potentially allows these pick-up trucks to access places that may limit access by commercial traffic or users, such as state parkways.

Lastly, the bill makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2024, for the electric commercial vehicle exemption and October 1, 2024, for the pick-up truck registration provision.

WEIGHT TOLERANCE EXEMPTION

The bill requires officials and law enforcement officers who are authorized to enforce the state's vehicle weight limit restrictions to grant a weight tolerance exemption of 2,000 pounds to any commercial motor vehicle powered primarily by electric battery. The exemption applies to

the gross, total axle, total tandem, and bridge formula weight limits. Under existing law, the maximum gross vehicle weight allowed on Connecticut roads without an overweight permit is generally 80,000 pounds (subject to the requirements of the federal bridge formula weight limit). Thus, the bill increases the maximum gross weight for electric commercial vehicles to 82,000 pounds.

The bill's exemption mirrors a federal exemption, which the state must already comply with for vehicles on interstate highways (see BACKGROUND). (Electric power units (i.e., truck tractors) on commercial vehicles are heavier than diesel powered units because of the weight of the battery. Subject to the same weight limits, electric powered tractor-trailers cannot carry as much cargo.)

PICK-UP TRUCK REGISTRATION

By law, pick-up trucks with a GVWR of 12,500 pounds or less that are not used for commercial purposes must be registered as combination vehicles, unless they fall at or under the GVWR threshold for pick-up truck passenger registration. (A combination registration is the type issued to vehicles that are used for both private passenger and commercial purposes.) The bill increases this threshold by 50 pounds from 8,500 to 8,550 pounds. It also requires, rather than allows, the motor vehicles commissioner to issue a passenger registration to qualifying pick-up trucks. As under existing law, pick-up trucks pay the same weight-based fee that applies to commercial vehicles, regardless of whether they are registered as passenger, combination, or commercial vehicles.

By requiring noncommercial pick-up trucks with a GVWR of 8,501 to 8,500 pounds to be registered as passenger vehicles, the bill potentially allows them to access roads or other places that limit access by commercial traffic. For example, vehicles with passenger registrations are generally permitted on state parkways (i.e., the Merritt, Wilbur Cross, and Milford Parkways), but state regulations prohibit vehicles with combination registrations and a gross weight above 7,500 pounds from using state parkways (Conn. Agencies Regs., § 14-298-249(f)). Under the bill, these pick-up trucks may use the parkways regardless of

the vehicle's gross weight because they have passenger registrations.

BACKGROUND

Gross Vehicle Weight and Gross Vehicle Weight Rating

By law, gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) is the manufacturer-specified maximum loaded weight of a single or combination (articulated) vehicle. The GVWR of a combination vehicle is the GVWR of the power unit plus the GVWR of the towed units. "Gross weight" is a vehicle's light weight (unloaded weight) plus the weight of its load. For tractor-trailers, gross weight is the light weight of the tractor and the trailer plus the weight of its load (CGS § 14-1(41) & (42)).

Federal Weight Exemption for Electric Commercial Vehicles

Federal law allows vehicles powered primarily by electric battery to exceed the weight limit on the power unit by up to 2,000 pounds, up to a maximum gross vehicle weight of 82,000 pounds (23 U.S.C. § 127(s)). Federal Highway Administration guidance specifies that, in addition to the gross weight limit, these vehicles may also exceed the limits on the power unit for the single axle, tandem axle, and federal bridge formula maximum weights, as long as the total gross vehicle weight is not over 82,000 pounds. The guidance further confirms that states must allow this additional weight for electric powered vehicles on the interstates and within reasonable access to the interstates.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Transportation Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 26 Nay 10 (03/18/2024)