



Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association

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The Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association (OOIDA) has represented the interests of small business truckers and professional drivers for over 35 years. Currently, there are more than 160,000 OOIDA members nationwide who collectively own and operate more than 260,000 individual heavy-duty trucks.

In fact, the majority of trucking in this country is small business, as 96% of all carriers have less than 20 trucks in their fleet and 86% of carriers have fleets of just 6 or fewer trucks. Owner-operators represent nearly half of the total number of Class 7 and Class 8 trucks operated in the United States. These small business motor carriers have an intensely personal and vested interest in highway safety as any safety-related incident may not only affect their personal health, but also dramatically impact their livelihood.

OOIDA sincerely desires to see further improvements in highway safety and actual progress towards highway safety goals. The federal truck safety effort is two decades old and has consumed more than \$3 billion of taxpayer money. Undeniably, there has been a safety benefit, but much more could be done through the genuine enforcement of all existing regulations related to the trucking industry.

OOIDA is concerned that FMCSA has continually misdirected its limited resources in a manner that diverts enforcement priorities away from efforts that would have a greater impact on highway safety. The agency's enforcement priorities have placed an increasing emphasis on targeting drivers while largely ignoring the enforcement of regulations related to corporate motor carriers and transportation intermediaries. This model has failed to achieve the desired results. With the exception of seatbelt usage, year-to-year enforcement data fails to show meaningful declines in most reported safety-related offenses.

Enforcement priorities that ignore the relationship between highway safety and the coercive demands of freight brokers, shippers, receivers and motor carriers upon drivers are doomed to miss the mark in achieving real improvements in highway safety. The demands and expectations of trucking stakeholders on truck drivers for each load they take are far more pervasive than any inspection scheme and schedule of fines that either Congress or FMCSA could devise. Unless those economic issues are addressed, drivers who become disqualified from driving for violating the hours-of-service rules and other safety regulations will simply be replaced by new drivers facing the same economic pressures. Only by addressing the underlying economic issues is there the potential for making significant improvements to trucking and highway safety.

The first step towards achieving significant improvements is the vigorous enforcement of all existing regulations related to motor carrier safety and freight brokers. Unfortunately, there has been a benign acceptance of the poor safety practices of larger, well established motor carriers. For too long motor carriers have not been held responsible for their practices or for the actions of their drivers. In similar fashion, through non-existent enforcement, unscrupulous brokers of general freight transportation have been allowed to take advantage of small business motor carriers on a daily basis forcing those truckers into difficult economic and safety related decisions.

Next, FMCSA must formulate new rulemakings or modifications to existing regulations that will have a meaningful impact on the trucking industry and highway safety such as ensuring that hours-of-service rules hold all industry stakeholders accountable for their actions and mandating driver training. Optimum trucking and highway safety can only be achieved by holistically developing a safety culture that acknowledges the perspectives of people behind the wheel and accounts for all industry stakeholders.