

CHICAGO TEAMSTERS JOINT COUNCIL 25



NEWS»

OBAMA ADMINISTRATION TO RECONSIDER TRUCKER RULE Hoffa: Longer Hours Behind the Wheel Dangerous for Members, Driving Public

The Obama administration has agreed to reconsider a rule that allows long-haul truckers to drive for up to 11 hours straight, bowing to safety advocates who say longer hours lead to greater fatigue and more accidents.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration signed an agreement late Monday with safety and labor groups pledging to revise the rule that became final in the waning days of the Bush administration.

“We believe that starting over and developing a rule that can help save lives is the smart thing to do,” said Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood.

For 60 years, truckers were allowed to drive a maximum of 10 hours at a time. The Bush administration and the trucking industry wanted to let truckers have an extra hour of driving time. The rule also cut rest and recovery time at the end of a work week from 50 or more hours off duty to as little as 34 hours off-duty.

The transportation agency isn't saying exactly what it will do, but opponents of expanded hours are hopeful a new rule will be closer to the original limits.

“We are pleased that the government has decided to take seriously its responsibility to protect truck drivers and the public from unsafe driving conditions instead of bending to the interests of the trucking industry,” said Greg Beck, an attorney for the consumer group Public Citizen.

The FMCSA says it will propose a new rule within the next nine months.

A federal appeals court struck the rule down twice, saying the government did not adequately explain its reasoning for adding the extra hour. But the Bush administration reinstated the rule each time. Public Citizen, Parents Against Tired Truckers, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters sued to get the rule thrown out.

“We will continue to push for a rule that protects trucks drivers, instead of the greed of the trucking industry,” said Teamsters president Jim Hoffa. “Longer hours behind the wheel are dangerous for our members and the driving public.”

Clayton Boyce, spokesman for American Trucking Associations, said the number of truck-involved fatalities and injuries on highways has decreased since the new rules took effect. “It's been shown during that time that the rules as they are constructed are safe,” Boyce said.