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TEAMSTERS SEEK REVERSAL OF BUSH-ERA HOURS-OF-SERVICE RULE

Teamsters Oppose 34-Hour 'Restart' as Threat to Driver Health, Public Safety

The Teamsters Union urged federal regulators at a hearing to reverse a Bush-era midnight regulation that increased the number of hours truckers can drive.

The Teamsters have been fighting the regulation since it was first issued in 2003. It raised the number of hours truck drivers can spend behind the wheel from 10 to 11 consecutive hours each shift, and from 60 to 77 hours of driving each week. The rule cut off-duty rest and recovery time at the work week's end from 50 or more hours off duty to as little as 34 hours off duty.

"We must protect our truck drivers' health and safety," said Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa. "Study after study shows that more time behind the wheel is dangerous for truckers and for the driving public."

LaMont Byrd, Director of the Teamsters' Health and Safety Department, commented on Tuesday during the first of four listening sessions held by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA). The agency is preparing a proposal for new hours-of-service regulations for commercial truck drivers.

"The agency issued a rule that favors increasing driver productivity and increasing the profits of motor carriers over driver health and safety," Byrd said. "The current rules regarding hours of service, the 34-hour restart provision and the sleeper berth provision must be changed."

Byrd said the union opposes the provision that allows drivers to return to work after only 34 hours off duty.

"We negotiated language into our collective bargaining agreements that prohibits the use of restart, except in rare situations, and those runs are negotiated with the employer on a case-by-case basis," Byrd said.

Despite legal challenges, the Bush administration in November 2008 issued the regulation allowing longer driving time. The Teamsters – along with Public Citizen, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety and the Truck Safety Coalition – challenged the rule in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. In October, the Teamsters agreed to put the lawsuit on hold in exchange for an agreement with FMCSA that it would revise the hours-of-service rule.



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The percentage of fatal crashes that result from driver fatigue rose 20 percent from 2004 to 2005, the first year in which the longer hours of driving were allowed.

Roughly one-third of the Teamsters' 1.4 million workers are commercial drivers covered by the hours of service regulation.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters was founded in 1903 and represents 1.4 million hardworking men and women in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico.