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STATE REPRESENTATIVE ◆ 42ND ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Public Hearing
Committee on Forestry
Wednesday, March 3rd, 2010
3:00pm, Rm. 415 NW

Testimony for Assembly Bill 778

AB 778 would change how Wisconsin assesses weight limits on roadways throughout the state year round. The problem this legislation addresses arises out of the difficulty logging operations encounter when transporting logs to the mill. The bill makes modifications to weight limit regulations for vehicles hauling raw forest products.

AB 778 would allow logging trucks the flexibility of using a six-axle vehicle to carry more weight on Wisconsin roadways. By allowing more weight on more axels we can better preserve roads, allow less road time for logging trucks, and give independent logging outfits another tool in the toolbox for making it through tough economic times.

This legislation would allow raw forest product haulers with a 98,000 lb RS permit to continue hauling 98,000 lbs throughout the year. These trucks must have six axles rather than the usual five. The additional axle disperses the pounds per square inch (called Equalized Standard Axle Loads: ESALs). More poundage spread across an additional axle does less damage than many trucks carrying 80,000 lbs on five axles.

Both the federal government and the State of Wisconsin have set their individual axle weight limits at 20,000 lbs per axle. A six-axle truck carrying 98,000 lbs is well below that limit by 18,000 lbs.

Another portion of the bill allows raw forest product haulers to reload if the vehicles per-axle weight is over limit by less than 2,000 pounds. If the hauler chooses not to reload, they can opt to pay a $50 forfeiture instead, similar to current law for other vehicles. We believe this option should be available to all raw forest product haulers, especially those doing less damage to the State's roads.

Helping Wisconsin business weather this difficult recession means we need to give small companies the flexibility to increase profit margins. Wisconsin's two largest sectors of the economy, agriculture and forestry, are very similar. They are comprised of independent, small-scale operations that try to maximize all options available. Just like farmers, Wisconsin loggers are feeling the squeeze of this economy. Lumber prices are down, fuel prices are rising and our forestry industry desperately needs opportunities to make ends meet. Transportation is a key component to a logger's long-term success and this legislation gives them a hand.

We understand the concerns from the local governments, especially concerning seasonal posting for the spring break up. I truly believe there can be a consensus found on this very important legislation. I can assure you that we will continue collaborating with our hard-working loggers and local governments to find the solutions we need for keeping Wisconsin businesses moving through these difficult economic times.

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Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association

March 3, 2010

Assembly Committee on Forestry
Rep. Fred Clark Chair

Testimony for AB~~761~~ 778

Good Afternoon Mr. Chairman and committee members. My name is Henry Schienebeck and I am here to testify in favor of Assembly Bill 761 on behalf of the members of the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association. It is our request that AB 761 be passed to complete one of the main intentions of ACT 167 which was enacted on March 21st 2006. In a press release dated March 8th 2006, it states, and I quote, "This measure allows logging trucks to carry that weight limit (referring to the 98,000lbs) ***year long*** if the trucks are equipped with an extra set of brakes and one additional axle. Adding the axle will significantly help to distribute the weight of the truck more evenly, actually making hauling heavier loads easier on our roads and safer than before".

With the exception of the purpose of AB 761 which is to allow log trucks to haul year round on state roads, including the period of spring thaw, Act 167 has been very beneficial to the state of Wisconsin and to the timber industry. Act 167 has lived up to expectations in regards to lowering axle weight on all roads, providing higher fines for violators by more than doubling the cost of a standard fine and giving state enforcement agencies an added tool to target violators through the use of collected weight scale tickets. It has also increased safety with added braking capacity, increased safety by less vehicle miles traveled and reducing the amount of greenhouse gas emissions by burning more than a million and half less gallons of fossil fuel.

Our purpose for requesting AB 761 is to allow the transport of forest products from temporary storage landings located on class A state highways, to receiving facilities such NEWPAGE, Wausau Paper, PCA and others. I want to make it very clear that we are not advocating the use of secondary roads during spring thaw at permitted weights, only class A state highways.

You might ask why the timber industry should be allowed to haul full weight during spring thaw when others cannot and I would like to make a couple of points: Our first point is that the timber industry has one of the only axle weights less than the Federal and State axle weights allowed even during spring thaw. The standard state and federal axle weight year round is 20,000 pounds and our permit allows no more than 18,000 pounds per axle at any given time. Other industries that operate within the state have axle weights that are as high as 25,000 pounds on a single axle.

Another point that we would make is that according to The Transportation Information Center, which is part of the University of Wisconsin, road design is based on ESAL which stands for Equivalent Single Axle Load. The number of ESALS determine the life expectancy of the roads. Depending on trailer type, a standard 5 axle tractor trailer over the road configurations which run 24/7 365 days per year on all roads, has an ESAL rating of 2.4 to 3.2. The configurations the timber industry most commonly uses have ESAL ratings 3.11 and 2.85 (supplied by Wisconsin

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County Highway Association) respectively for truck and pup and tractor trailer configuration, which is well within the industry standard operating range. It can be stated that the five axle standard truck configuration and the six axle log truck configuration have the same ESAL load ratings, however there is one difference, and that is the amount of freight being moved per load. In order to move the same amount of material that would be moved by the six axle truck in four loads (392,000lbs.) it would take nearly five trucks at the standard gross weight. Wouldn't you agree that if the ESAL ratings are the same, that there will be less road damage caused by four truck trips rather than five? The cost savings would substantial to the trucking company as well the Department of Transportation.

With respect to the bridges, an issue that we are already dealing with, a recent WI DOT Truck Size and Weight study recently completed in 2009, also supports the benefits of the six axle configuration in both safety and efficiency in moving product.

Mr. Chairman and committee members, we cannot stress enough the importance of the passage of this legislation. As we see it this is a win, win for everyone. To keep one of the few industries in Wisconsin that has economic opportunities to expand in biomass, biofuels and other areas it is imperative that we are as efficient as possible in all areas especially in transportation. AB761 will add efficiency to transportation with no additional costs to the taxpayers for road maintenance and repair, it will add safety by decreasing the number of truck miles traveled, and it will most certainly reduce the amount green house gas emissions for cleaner air.

In closing we would like to thank the committee for taking a pro-active approach to insuring that the forestry industry remains a key component to the states economy and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the GLTPA,

Henry Schienebeck

Henry Schienebeck
Executive Director
Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association.

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WISCONSIN PAPER COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

March 3, 2010

To: Assembly Committee on Forestry

From: Earl Gustafson
Vice President – Energy, Forestry & Human Resources

Subject: Assembly Bill 778

Chairperson Clark and members of the Committee on Forestry, the Wisconsin Paper Council is pleased to appear in support of Assembly Bill 778.

Enactment will be good public policy as it will enable Wisconsin's timber producers to transport raw forest products, including pulpwood, in a cost-effective and energy efficient manner year 'round – two crucial factors for business survival and success.

Wisconsin's timber producers and haulers provide the basic raw material needed by the state's paper industry. Whether our diverse products are manufactured with pulpwood or recycled paper, their roots are in a forest. We are dependent on a healthy logging industry to fulfill its crucial role in the forests products' cycle of sustainability – from generation to growth, stewardship and productive management – to harvesting and transportation – to primary and secondary manufacturing – to the start of a new cycle beginning again with regeneration.

We respectfully urge the Committee on Forestry to recommend adoption of AB 778.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important measure.

Earl Gustafson

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State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

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Testimony for Public Hearing – Assembly Committee on Forestry March 3, 2010

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Asemby Bill -778
Relating to: weight limitations for vehicles transporting raw forest products. Introduced by representatives Clark, Friske, Sherman, Soletski, Mursau, Bies and Townsend, cosponsored by senators Holperin, Jauch, Hansen, Taylor and Cowles.

The DNR supports the concept of Assembly Bill 778

The forest products industry is a very important part of Wisconsin's economy with annual shipments of $20 billion dollars and employing 65,000 workers. We encourage the legislature to help keep this industry strong and growing in these difficult economic times. This legislation will reduce transportation costs of raw material helping the Wisconsin forest products industry compete in the global market place.

Assembly Bill 778 would also help address vehicle emission environmental concerns. With the addition of 18,000 pounds to the gross vehicle weight limit, the product hauled in four trips is equivalent to what would have taken five trips, reducing vehicle emissions that would have been generated by about 20%.

The Bill will also reduce costs and improve profitability for raw forest product trucking enterprises. As a result, this legislation may also help to address the aging work force in this area by making it a more attractive enterprise for younger workers.