

Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota

Darren Schimke, President | 218-779-4122 | dschimke@wiktel.com

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Senate Transportation Committee,

Mr. Chairman and members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Darren Schimke, President of the Professional Fire Fighters of North Dakota (PFFND). I represent 415 professional firefighters across our great state. We appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition of HCR 3001.

The PFFND understands that HCR 3001 is only requesting Congress to temporarily amend restrictions to conduct a road train pilot program on National Network highways and interstates. The PFFND strongly believes that during this study, and afterwards, if approved, road trains will pose undue safety hazards to firefighters, EMT's and paramedics while on these highways responding to emergency scenes and while on said scenes treating motor vehicle accident victims and/or individuals experiencing a medical emergency while traveling. We base our opinion on actual incidences and near misses that have been witnessed throughout our State by our members. We respond and do all types of "work" on these highways, the shoulders and ditches. This work consists of vehicle fires, patient extrication, vehicle accident treatments and medical emergencies.

All members of the PFFND are employed with Departments that have the National Network highways and interstates running through or near them or are at least part of their respective response areas. This does not include the departments that provide patient transports. These transports take our members not only throughout North Dakota but also into Montana, South Dakota and Minnesota. An example would be Williston ND Fire/Ambulance conducting a patient transport from Williston, ND to Rochester, MN.

We are not implying that the operators of road trains would be causing accidents throughout our State. In fact, we believe that these operators are some of the best drivers in the country. The fact is, circumstances present themselves and accidents occur. Our State is considered rural by some but we are not as large and barren as the Australian Outback where these road trains are more common. What we do have is more highway traffic then some of the Outback. Some of our National Network highways are the main thoroughfare through cities and towns. Additionally, our wind and snow conditions can be quite treacherous for large vehicles. Again, it's not necessarily the road train operators; it's others that may try to pass these long vehicles through snow dust, heavy winds or just while climbing up a good old North Dakota mountain not knowing what is coming up on the other side.

We respectfully request your consideration of a Do Not Pass recommendation regarding HCR 3001.

Thank you, Darren Schimke