Mexican Trucks Are On Our Roads

by Phyllis Schlafly November 9, 2011

Phyllis Schlafly

Phyllis Schlafly

After years of negative votes in Congress and the opposition of the American people, on October 21 Barack Obama allowed the first Mexican truck to cross the border at Laredo, Texas and head north to deliver door-to-door service of its load of industrial equipment. This implemented an agreement quietly signed by Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood in Mexico City on July 6 with Mexico's secretary of Communications and Transportation.

Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA) calls this deal a major anti-jobs program, saying: "We're literally taking good jobs here in America and passing them over the line to Mexico." Todd Spencer, executive vice president of the Independent Drivers Association, a non-union trade association, said 100,000 trucking jobs will be lost.

The Mexican company that won the distinction of being first in line to cross the border was Transportes Olympic. FMCSA (Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration) immediately granted it "Permanent Operating Authority," instead of making the company abide by the specified 18-month waiting period, which means Transportes' trucks will not have to be inspected at the border every time they cross.

FMCSA has announced that all Mexican trucks participating in this project will be given Electronic On-Board Recorders (EOBR) equipped with global positioning capabilities and paid for by the U.S. taxpayers. FMCSA also announced that U.S. trucks must install similar equipment at their own expense.

U.S. taxpayers are also being required to pick up the cost of replacing old mufflers on dozens of Mexican trucks at a cost of $1,600 each, while U.S. truckers must buy

their own mufflers. The excuse is that this will improve air quality on our highways.

Ads are provided by Google and are not

selected or endorsed by Eagle Forum

But EOBRs and mufflers are only part of the expensive regulations hitting U.S. truckers. Obama has imposed new fuel-efficiency regulations, new emissions targets, and new safety regulations.

The large trucking firms may be able to absorb the cost, but independent truckers will be hit hard. If they can't afford to buy compliant rigs, they will have to cease operation.

It's apparently Obama's conscious policy to disfavor small trucking firms by regulatory favoritism. It's also Obama's conscious policy to favor Mexican trucks with U.S. taxpayer handouts.

The chatter in Washington is about creating jobs for Americans and cutting spending. However, Todd Spencer says "this program does exactly the opposite for both" and will "jeopardize the livelihoods of tens of thousands of U.S.-based small-business truckers" as well as "undermine the standard of living for the rest of the driver community."

Americans who drive daily on U.S. highways are very concerned about safety when Mexican trucks are added to U.S. trucks already on our roads. The U.S.-Mexico agreement requires us to accept Mexican commercial driver licenses, but Mexico has no real system of driver licensing, training, drug testing, or physical requirements, or truck safety inspection or brake standards that match U.S. rules.

Mexico cannot produce records of drivers' accidents or drug or alcohol use, or a truck's record of brake safety or emissions. Also, Mexico is a country where bribes are the customary method of bypassing regulations.

George W. Bush's Transportation Secretary Mary Peters admitted at a Senate hearing that the U.S. regularly checks "proficient in English" when Mexican drivers answer questions and explain U.S. traffic signs in Spanish. Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND) was so incredulous at this reply that he had her repeat it, which she did.

The LaHood-Mexican agreement pretends to address this prevarication, stating that the exams are to be conducted orally in English. However, the agreement does not specify that the Mexican driver must speak English when he responds and explains U.S. laws and signs.

Even though Obama is a big advocate of clean air and green jobs, there is no mention in the agreement that Mexican trucks should adhere to the environmental standards imposed on American trucks. Juan Carlos Muñoz, president of Mexico's National Chamber of Motor Transport of Freight, said that Mexican companies "do not have sufficient capacity to supply the diesel suitable for these new technologies," and that, if held to these requirements, Mexican truckers would be unable to "ever enter the United States, at least not for the next 20 years."

The reciprocal promise to allow U.S. trucks to drive into Mexico doesn't pass the laugh test. A U.S. trucker would be taking his life into his hands if he drives his truck into northern Mexico where he would become a target to be robbed and killed by the Mexican drug cartels.