

**OPPOSE THE “DRIVE-SAFE ACT” –
FIX THE PROBLEMS CAUSING THE TRUCK DRIVER SHORTAGE,
DON’T ADD TO THEM BY PUTTING TEENS BEHIND THE WHEEL OF 80,000 LB.
TRUCKS ON INTERSTATES**

Broad Opposition to this Bill Includes: Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, American Public Health Association, Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH), Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, Road Safe America, Truck Safety Coalition, Consumer Federation of America, The CRASH Foundation, Parents Against Tired Truckers, Society for the Advancement of Violence and Injury Research, Center for Auto Safety, National Consumers League, Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety, Trauma Foundation, KidsAndCars.org, truck drivers and truck crash victims and survivors.

Debunking the Untruths of the so-called DRIVE-Safe Act

Background: In 2015, supporters of allowing drivers under the age of 21 to operate a commercial motor vehicle (CMV) in interstate commerce pushed to get a pilot program included in the FAST Act (Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act, Pub. L. 114-94). There was strong and widespread opposition to this proposal, and a compromise provision was developed which directed the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to conduct a pilot program to assess the ability of younger drivers with specific military training to operate trucks in interstate commerce. This compromise was enacted with bipartisan support by Congress.

What’s Happened So Far: The DRIVE-Safe Act (Developing Responsible Individuals for a Vibrant Economy Act, [S. 3352](#), [H.R. 5358](#)) was introduced in the 115th Congress. This bill would have created an apprenticeship program for drivers under the age of 21 to operate CMVs in interstate commerce. No action was taken on the bill.

In 2018, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) [established proposed requirements](#) for participating in the 2015 pilot program as well as the type of data to be collected. The pilot program has yet to commence. **Before enacting a major, drastic change in established federal law, Congress should wait until the pilot program is completed and scientific research and data generated by the program is evaluated.**

Truck Crash Deaths Are Up Dramatically: Fatal truck crashes occur at an alarmingly high rate and are on the rise. In 2017, 4,761 people were killed in crashes involving large trucks. This is an increase of 9 percent from the previous year and an increase of 41 percent since 2009. Additionally, 145,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks in 2016 (the latest year for which injury data are available). In fatal two-vehicle crashes between a large truck and a passenger motor vehicle, 97 percent of the fatalities were occupants of the passenger vehicle.

**Congress should be considering proven solutions to improve truck safety, not proposals that would further degrade it, like the DRIVE-Safe Act.
Learn the facts about what this legislation will do.**

MYTH: *Younger Drivers Are as Safe as Older More Experienced Drivers.*

FACT: **Younger CMV Drivers Have Higher Crash Rates.**

- CMV drivers under the age of 19 are four times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes. Additionally, CMV drivers between the ages of 19-20 are six times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes.
- This alarming reality is not surprising given that generally younger drivers are more likely to be involved in fatal crashes because they lack driving experience and tend to take greater risks.

- Development of portions of the brain vital to decision making, specifically the pre-frontal cortex, may not be fully reached until one's mid-20s.

MYTH: The Technology Requirement Will Improve Safety for Young Truck Drivers.

FACT: The Technology is Only Required During the Short Probationary Period. Afterward, Teen Truck Drivers Can Drive Any Trucks.

- Looking closer at the inclusion of a requirement that trucks driven by younger drivers be equipped with safety technology reveals that the “emperor has no clothes.” Specifically, the technology is only required to be used during the scant probationary period. And, it actually may do more harm than good in training a teen driver to safely operate a truck on a long term basis as the apprentice will learn to operate a truck with the technology and the benefits it can provide, but then there is no guarantee they will operate a truck with that same equipment once the brief probationary period concludes.
- The technology will also not account for some mistakes this age group tends to make. Younger drivers exhibit behaviors such as increased levels of distraction and other risky driving behaviors such as speeding in excess of posted limits, following too closely, violating traffic rules, and not using seatbelts.
- If the segments of the trucking industry supporting this legislation would like to improve safety and working conditions for truck drivers, they should support a variety of proven safety technology as standard equipment in all CMVs instead of only requiring the use of certain systems under the legislation as a *quid pro quo* for interstate teen truckers.

MYTH: All Motor Carriers Would Benefit From the DRIVE-Safe Act.

FACT: The Public, Safety, Public Health and Consumer Groups, Motor Carriers and Truck Drivers Oppose Lowering the CDL Age.

- In addition to the groups above, the public has overwhelmingly rejected lowering the minimum age for interstate truck and bus drivers with 73 percent of respondents in opposition, according to a 2015 public opinion poll conducted by ORC International.
- In 2001, a petition was filed with FMCSA to lower the age at which a person could obtain a commercial driver's license (CDL) to operate in interstate commerce from 21 to 18. The FMCSA declined to lower the minimum age for an unrestricted CDL because the agency could not conclude that the safety performance of younger drivers was on par with, or even close to, that of older CMV drivers. The public overwhelmingly rejected the idea with 96 percent of individuals who responded opposing the proposal along with 88 percent of the truck drivers and 86 percent of the motor carriers after the petition was posted in the Federal Register.

MYTH: The DRIVE-Safe Act Requires Adequate Training for Teen Truck Drivers.

FACT: The Training Proposals in this Bill Are Woefully Inadequate.

- The first probationary period only consists of 80 hours of behind-the-wheel training which can be completed in a little over one work week while abiding by federal hour-of-service (HOS) requirements. Further, under current HOS requirements, the 160 hours of driving time in the second probationary period can be covered in just an additional two weeks.
- The qualifications for the teen truck driver passing the probationary periods are left entirely to the discretion of the employer. They are not based on any standard tests or evaluations given by an independent party.
- A teen truck driver that is involved in a crash or is given a citation for a moving violation during the probationary periods is not disqualified from continuing to operate a truck.
- The actual trainers may also have insufficient experience themselves as they could qualify immediately upon reaching age 21.

- In comparison, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requires pilots working for passenger airlines to have approximately 1,500 hours of flight time.
- Driving a truck is one of the most dangerous occupations according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, these training requirements pale in comparison to other less dangerous jobs. For example, Texas requires a journeyman plumber to have 8,000 hours of experience, Oklahoma requires 4,000 verifiable hours of on the job experience for a residential electrical journeyman, and barbers licensed in Virginia must accumulate 1,100 hours in school.

MYTH: The DRIVE-Safe Act Will Solve the Truck Driver Shortage.

FACT: Problems Within the Industry That Create Untenable Working Conditions Remain Unaddressed.

- Allowing teenagers to drive trucks in interstate commerce will only serve to exacerbate the major problems with truck driver working conditions. Currently, a staggeringly high driver turnover rate of over 90 percent exists among large truckload carriers. A number of factors contribute to this frequency, and fixes are available that don't needlessly increase exposure of the public to a crash-prone segment of drivers.
- Truck driver fatigue is a well-known safety problem. Drivers often operate very long shifts without adequate sleep, on constantly changing schedules that conflict with biological circadian rhythms. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has repeatedly cited fatigue as a major contributor to truck crashes and included reducing fatigue related crashes on its 2019-20 Most Wanted List.
- Studies also consistently show that long working hours and lack of sleep resulting from these grinding work schedules are related to adverse health effects including obesity, hypertension, diabetes, depression, heart attack and stroke.

The “DRIVE-Safe Act” will accomplish the exact opposite of its name, imperiling teenagers and everyone sharing the roads. We urge you to oppose its advancement.