

2007 ASSEMBLY BILL 238

April 10, 2007 – Introduced by JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL. Referred to Committee on Transportation.

- 1 **AN ACT relating to:** requiring the Department of Transportation to study vehicle
2 size and weight limits.

Analysis by the Legislative Reference Bureau

This bill is explained in the NOTES provided by the Joint Legislative Council in the bill.

JOINT LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PREFATORY NOTE: This bill was prepared for the special committee on highway weight limits. The study committee was created by the joint legislative council in response to the mandate of 2005 Wisconsin Act 167 which provides as follows:

“The joint legislative council shall conduct a comprehensive study to review the system of motor vehicle weight limits on the state’s highways and bridges. The study shall include the issues and interrelationships between economic impacts, truck configurations, expected compliance levels and enforcement constraints, and impacts on the public infrastructure, operational, and safety issues. The joint legislative council shall convene a committee to conduct the study, and representatives of local government, the department of transportation, the trucking industry, the raw forest products industry, and agricultural producers shall be invited to serve on the committee....”

Early in its work, the special committee was informed of the recent completion of a study of truck size and weight limits in Minnesota. The final report of this study was published in June 2006 in a report entitled “Minnesota Truck Size and Weight Project.” The report was prepared by consultants for the Minnesota department of transportation, although the department provided leadership for the study. The study was comprehensive and included participation by, and input from, a substantial number of public and private stakeholders. In the study, Minnesota assessed changes to the truck

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size and weight limit laws that would strike a balance between: (1) benefits to the Minnesota economy resulting from appropriate size and weight limits; and (2) continuing public safety and protection of state roads and bridges.

The special committee noted many similarities between issues considered in the Minnesota study and issues that were suggested to the special committee for consideration. The special committee believes that there would be substantial value in conducting a similar study in Wisconsin. The Minnesota study identified a number of truck axle and weight configurations, changes in the seasonal weight limits, and other policy modifications that would have a positive cost–benefit ratio when comparing costs of protecting the highway infrastructure and ensuring public safety to the benefits to the state's economy of reducing the costs of trucking by allowing heavier loads. The committee determined that if similar findings were made in a Wisconsin study, statutory and policy changes could be based on those findings and would result in a net benefit to the Wisconsin economy while taking into consideration the effects on the infrastructure and safety of state and local highways, roads, and bridges.

The special committee also determined that the broad scope of such a study would require significant expertise, time, and resources, and would be beyond the capabilities of the committee. Therefore, the special committee recommends that the department of transportation be directed to contract for a study of the benefits and costs of the Wisconsin truck size and weight limit laws to identify changes in those laws that would have a net benefit to Wisconsin's economy, when considering the costs of protecting highway infrastructure and safety, and the benefits that would result from reducing the cost of truck transportation.

1 **SECTION 1. Nonstatutory provisions.**

2 (1) The department of transportation shall contract for a study of Wisconsin's
3 truck size and weight limit laws, to identify changes in those laws that would have
4 a net benefit to Wisconsin's economy, when considering the costs of protecting
5 highway infrastructure and safety, and the benefits that would result from reducing
6 the cost of truck transportation.

7 (2) The consultant that undertakes the study under this section shall review
8 those vehicle configurations, changes in seasonal restrictions, and other policy issues
9 that were found to have a net benefit in the cost–benefit analysis in the Minnesota
10 truck size and weight project final report that was issued in June 2006.

11 (3) The department of transportation shall appoint an advisory committee
12 under section 227.13 of the statutes to assist in the review and report required under
13 this section. The advisory committee shall include representation from the

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1 department of commerce and local governmental units, trucking companies,
2 industries and small businesses that depend on truck transport, enforcement
3 agencies, and other groups and individuals that are interested in and knowledgeable
4 about truck size and weight limits. All advisory committee members may present
5 written commentary on or dissenting views from the report and the department of
6 transportation shall incorporate that commentary and any dissents into the final
7 report.

8 (4) The consultant that undertakes the study under this section shall prepare
9 a report on the results of its study. The department of transportation shall submit
10 the report to the legislature in the manner provided under section 13.172 (3) of the
11 statutes, no later than January 1, 2009.

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(END)