



# JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

## *Senate Bill 574*

February 12, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today on Senate Bill 574.

We have drafted this bill in collaboration with the Wisconsin Propane Gas Association and local stakeholders to help address the issues of skyrocketing propane prices and the extraordinary strain this has put on suppliers seeking to deliver propane to residential customers.

Current law allows the governor to declare an energy emergency via executive order during a period of disruption of energy supplies which poses a serious risk to the economic well-being, health, and welfare of the citizens of this state. During an energy emergency, after consultation with the Department of Administration (DOA), the Department of Transportation (DOT) may authorize the operation of overweight vehicles weighing 50,000 pounds or more carrying energy resources or fuel to exceed the per-axle weight limits by up to 10 percent and the gross vehicle weight limits by up to 15 percent for 30 days. Due to extreme cold weather this winter, DOA and DOT authorized the overweight transport of fuel on January 3, 2014. As of February 3, 2014, the agencies have extended the authorization for an additional 30 days in recognition of the ongoing emergency.

While the process we have in place deals with the issue of getting bulk propane supplies to market, the bill we have before us today addresses the smaller vehicles (26,000 pounds or less) that primarily deliver fuel to residential customers, many of whom live in rural areas. During the spring thaw, when many town roads are posted for special weight limits, the majority of these small propane supply trucks are weight-restricted to the extent they can only haul fractional loads. Not only does this create delays in delivering fuel to customers, it also dramatically increases the transportation costs of the suppliers and increases the overall number of trips a supplier must make over a given section of roadway. Similar to the process outlined above, DOA and DOT are still required to determine if an energy emergency exists.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

29TH SENATE DISTRICT

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**DATE:** February 12, 2014

**TO:** Members, Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs  
  
The Honorable Jerry Petrowski, Chair

**FROM:** Tom Rhatican, Assistant Deputy Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Senate Bill 574 (energy emergencies and vehicle weight limits)

Chairman Petrowski and Committee Members:

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) would like to provide some important background information and commentary to committee members as you consider 2013 Wisconsin Senate Bill 574 (SB 574). SB 574 relates to energy emergencies and vehicle weight limits. The Department supports SB 574.

Under current law, with limited exceptions, no person may operate on a highway any vehicle or combination of vehicles that exceeds certain statutory size or weight limits, unless the person obtains a permit issued by WisDOT or a local highway authority, as applicable. In addition, during an energy emergency, after consultation with the Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA), WisDOT may authorize, for a period not to exceed 30 days, the operation of overweight vehicles weighing 50,000 pounds or more and carrying energy resources or fuel or milk commodities to exceed statutory per-axle weight limits by up to 10 percent and statutory gross vehicle weight limits by up to 15 percent. This proposal creates a similar allowance for the delivery of propane and heating oil to Wisconsin residences and businesses.

SB 574 expands the ability of the State of Wisconsin to respond to energy emergencies, such as the one that currently exists. Specifically, this bill would allow WisDOT, during an energy emergency and after consultation with DOA, to authorize motor vehicles having a gross weight of 26,000 pounds or less and that are transporting propane or heating oil for delivery to residences, businesses or other end users to exceed posted special weight limits that have been imposed in connection with the thawing of frozen highways, which normally occurs in spring. A person operating a motor vehicle under this authorization must, to the extent practicable, deliver propane or heating oil during the times of day when the highways being used are the least vulnerable.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Nate Yahn, WisDOT legislative advisor, at (608) 266-1114.