

Testimony on HB 2202
to
The Senate Transportation Committee
By Chad Bontrager
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Good morning, Chairman Petersen and members of the committee. I am Chad Bontrager, agribusiness development coordinator and economist, with the Kansas Department of Agriculture, and I am here to express KDA's support of House Bill 2202. This proposed legislation will allow an automatic increase in hay transportation limits upon drought declaration in the state.

Kansas is entering the third consecutive year of extreme drought situations statewide. In 2011 and 2012, Governor Brownback issued executive orders to temporarily suspend certain motor carrier rules and regulations in order to expedite the delivery of hay to livestock in drought-stricken areas. While the executive orders have provided timely relief, allowing hay to be delivered to livestock farmers and ranchers in drought-stricken regions, making these exemptions automatic upon a drought declaration will further expedite drought response and delivery efforts.

The legislation would allow for the suspension of requirements for registration and fuel tax permits from the Kansas Department of Revenue and licensing, certification and permitting rules and regulations as required by the Kansas Corporation Commission during drought emergencies.

Safety on Kansas roadways is of paramount importance. As such, participating motor carriers would only be allowed to operate during daylight hours and must comply with flag, sign and lighting requirements for over-width vehicles. Additionally, participating motor carriers would not be allowed to drive during inclement weather conditions. This legislation does not remove the motor carrier's responsibilities to comply with the safety and commercial driver's license requirements.

The proposed legislation would increase the maximum weight and height for trucks delivering hay to drought-stricken areas. Participating motor carriers are limited to a load that does not exceed 12 feet in width and does not exceed a height of 14 feet, six inches. Under normal circumstances, haulers are required to obtain a permit for loads exceeding 8.5 feet in width and 14 feet in height.

All other applicable state and federal regulations continue to apply, including the requirement to have a valid driver's license. While we cannot make the rains come, we can take important steps to ensure our farmers and ranchers have access to the necessary tools to mitigate the effects of this devastating drought. Passing this legislation will play an important role in the state's drought response efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I will stand for questions at the appropriate time.