

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell and the House of Representatives today passed H.R. 1773, the Safe American Roads Act of 2007, which requires Mexican-domiciled trucks to meet current U.S. motor carrier safety requirements before they are permitted full access to American roadways. The legislation, of which Mitchell is a co-sponsor, passed 411-3.

Earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Transportation announced plans for a pilot program that would allow up to 100 Mexican trucking companies full access to America's highways. Currently Mexican-domiciled trucks are granted only limited access, confined to special "border zones" ranging from three to 25 miles wide.

"Above all else, we need ensure that our roadways are safe," said Mitchell. "Allowing foreign trucks that don't meet U.S. safety standards on our roadways is a serious risk, and I'm glad that the House of Representatives passed this measure with overwhelming bi-partisan support."

At a May 2 hearing, Mitchell requested that the committee amend the bill to include measures to ensure that foreign commercial truck drivers can understand American road signs, and communicate with traffic enforcement officials. That provision is included in the current version of H.R. 1773.

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Transportation Inspector General reported that Mexico has experienced difficulty developing an adequate commercial driver drug and alcohol testing system. The Inspector General also found inaccurate or incomplete data on commercial vehicles and drivers continued to be submitted by Mexico-based motor carriers.

Mitchell raised concerns about the pilot program at a House Subcommittee on Highways and Transit hearing on the issue on March 13, saying that public safety concerns had not yet been properly addressed.

"While loosening the restrictions on Mexican trucks may have an economic impact, for me, this is an issue of putting public safety first," said Mitchell at the time. "We need to ensure that Mexican trucks meet U.S. safety standards, and do not put our driving public at risk."

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, an estimated 300,000 Mexican-domiciled commercial trucks cross Arizona's six ports of entry annually.