

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Citing concerns about safety, U.S. Rep. Harry Mitchell voted today to stop a controversial U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) pilot program allowing commercial Mexican trucks full access to U.S. roads. Mitchell voted in favor of H.R. 6630, which passed the House by a bipartisan, veto-proof majority of 395 to 18.

“Safety has to be our top priority,” Mitchell said. “We must protect Arizona’s drivers by ensuring that all trucks on our roads comply with U.S. safety standards.”

The Department of Transportation (DOT) Office of Inspector General (IG) has repeatedly cited concerns about the safety standards of Mexican-domiciled carriers. According to a 2005 audit by the DOT’s IG, Mexico continues to have problems establishing an adequate system to test commercial drivers for drug and alcohol use. [Source: 2005 IG Audit, January 3, 2005] In March of 2008, the IG reported that the pilot program’s plans to check truck safety for each truck’s border crossing were insufficient. [Source: 2008 IG Report, March, 2008]

The House approved H.R. 6630 despite a veto threat issued earlier today by President Bush.

More than 6.5 million commercial vehicles pass through Arizona’s international ports of entry annually, a significant portion of which are commercial trucks from Mexico.

Mitchell Votes to Stop Controversial Mexican Trucking Program

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Mitchell has repeatedly worked to stop the pilot program. He cosponsored and voted for H.R. 1773, the Safe American Roads Act, in May 2007, and also voted for H.R. 2764, which would prohibit funding for this pilot program. Last month, Mitchell sent a letter to Secretary Mary Peters expressing his concern about the Department of Transportation's plans to extend the pilot program.