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American Trucking Association (2)

Max S. Baucus

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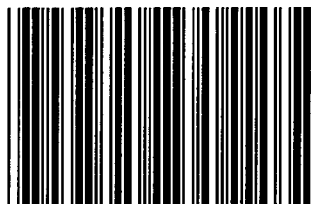
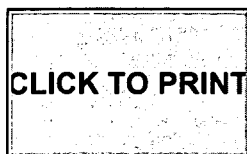
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(2) Subject* **none**

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BAUCUS

**Senator Max Baucus
American Trucking Association
February 13, 2007**

Thank you for your kind introduction

Ray. I want to tell you, I am thrilled that you have selected such a fine Montanan to be the First Vice Chairman of the American Trucking Association. We are proud of Ray Kuntz in Montana – he is a great ambassador for our state in his new national role. I also want to recognize your Chairman of the Board, Pat Quinn – He’s done a terrific job for ATA on the Infrastructure Committee. I appreciate his hard work.

A few years back, I drove a loaded tractor-trailer on I-90 from Missoula to Billings, Montana to get a better "feel" for the work that goes into being a trucker. I didn't want a "ride along," I wanted to drive.

I spent two days qualifying to operate a big rig, first with a bobtail, then with a trailer, and early in the morning, I took the wheel of a 1998 Volvo 610 pulling a 53-ft. dry van owned by Watkins-Shepard in Missoula. I saw Ray take a deep breath, or perhaps he was saying a short prayer, and I was on my way!

What an experience! I learned a lot on the road, picking up tips from other truckers like how important it is to put on your blinkers coming down Pipestone Pass while traveling over the Continental Divide.

I drove 340 miles to Billings and when I arrived, I tackled the task of backing up to the loading dock and I helped unload the trailer full of furniture. I just had to experience this because I'd always wanted to drive a big rig and because trucking is so critical to the economy in Montana and in the nation.

Trucking is big business. It helps support 1 in 11 workers in Montana, and provides \$690 million a year in payroll. And truckers in the Big Sky State deliver more than 80 percent of manufactured freight destined for Montana locations.

The trucking industry delivers the food to our tables and helps get the gasoline to our cars and trucks. When you stop to think about it, you help power our economy. We can't underestimate the importance of trucking, especially to the West and to land-locked states like Montana.

As a nation, we want to count on our highway system for movement of goods and services as well as military logistics. In 1919, Lieutenant Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower traveled with the Army's Transcontinental Motor Convoy. The convoy set a world record, traveling 3,251 miles, from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco, in 62 days. The Average speed was 6 mph and average progress was just over 58 miles a day.

When he became President over 30 years later, and after seeing the autobahns of Germany during World War II, one of his top priorities was building an interstate highway system. He wrote, "The old convoy had started me thinking about good, two-lane highways, but Germany had made me see the wisdom of broader ribbons across the land."

We should follow in that tradition and today we must provide oversight to ensure proper investments in the highway system and guard against misuse of tax payer dollars or overcharging of the users. We must manage our system to ensure high quality roads are available to all that need them, when they need them.

Today, I want to touch on a few points I know you all are concerned about, and let you know where I stand and how I can help. First, I want to address highway privatization.

Second, I want to talk about some ideas we are working on in the Finance Committee to help ease the burden on compliance with EPA regulations, and reducing emissions.

Third, I want to address proposals for new size and weight conditions and how they miss the mark.

And finally, I want to talk about ensuring the long term solvency of the highway trust fund.

One issue that I know tops your list is Highway privatization. Put simply, highway privatization does not serve our national transportation needs. Our highway system is a national asset and we need to manage it. This includes the oversight of how we finance our infrastructure, how we manage our system, and how we ensure access to it.

I do not support the current push by the Department of Transportation to alleviate congestion by selling off toll roads and entering into public-private partnerships.

This simply does not allow for an accessible national highway system that serves the needs of America's commerce and other national transportation interests. I know that the ATA held a press conference last week voicing your opposition to such plans and I am with you.

**As Chairman of the Senate Finance
Committee and the Subcommittee on
Transportation and Infrastructure, there are a
few additional transportation issues that I
plan to address this year.**

**The new 2007 Environmental Protection
Agency regulation requiring Ultra Low Sulfur
Diesel (ULSD) vehicles is creating big market
disruptions.**

Diesel trucks must meet dramatic reductions in emissions of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter. It will result in diesel engines having near-zero emissions when the regulation is fully implemented in 2010.

However, while federal regulation can require manufacturers and suppliers to produce emissions compliant products, the government cannot mandate the purchase of these engines.

2006 was a banner year for diesel truck sales, but so far this year, truck sales are dipping. The 2007 EPA regulations are partly to blame.

A 2007 diesel engine is \$4,000 to \$10,000 more expensive than a 2006 engine.

To avoid this cost increase, truckers accelerated purchases at the end of last year.

Today, truck sales are slumping and both professional and hourly employees are losing their jobs at manufacturing plants. The market is clearly out of whack.

This will not go away. We are likely to see this again in two years when the law is fully implemented.

I am aware of the problem and within the Finance Committee am looking for ways to reduce the cost to businesses to purchase the more expensive, EPA compliant trucks within the Finance Committee.

I want to use my chairmanship to make the trucking business more competitive.

Trucks can be manufactured with an auxiliary power unit installed, which are also called idling reduction devices. These small, mobile, diesel-powered engines can heat or air condition a parked truck without the use of the main engine.

Auxiliary power units can be added to diesel trucks to decrease emissions and save truckers money. An idling diesel truck burns 1 gallon of diesel fuel per hour. That can cost up to \$25 per night. I want to make the use of auxiliary power units more cost effective, and help reduce your overhead.

On a separate note, I am also concerned about the size and weight restrictions to which trucks are expected to adhere. In Montana, often the trucking industry is the only reliable way we can transport goods across the state.

For that reason, truck size and weight regulations should stay under the control of the interstate system and not be moved to the entire National Highway System.

The Safe Highways and Infrastructure Preservation Act (SHIPA) legislation which was introduced in the 109th Congress extending federal truck weight limits and non-divisible load regulations is not the way to go. States have been responsible in exercising their authority over truck size and weight and should retain their existing regulatory authority.

Finally, the funding of our highways is critical. I am proud to be an author of the highway bill and I look forward to your thoughts on the next one. I feel that I have a responsibility to protect the funding that keeps our roads safe and well maintained. Ensuring the long term solvency of the highway trust fund is one of my top priorities.

We have never allowed the highway trust fund to run out of resources before, and we never will.

That is why I fought hard to get the 2007 levels of the Highway Trust Fund included in the Continuing Resolution that Congress is considering on the Senate floor this week.

When we work together we can accomplish a lot for transportation. I am honored to have been invited to speak to you all today and look forward to tackling all the hard work we have ahead together.