



U.S. Department of  
Transportation

# News:

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REMARKS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY  
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ELIZABETH HANFORD DOLE  
AMERICAN TRUCKING ASSOCIATIONS TELECONFERENCE  
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The message in your last hour was very clear. One, you want to insure that your interests are represented in Washington, and two, you have great hope for the future. By your tone, your enthusiasm and your sparkling new headquarters you signal hope for the future.

And if I leave you with no other thought today, let me assure you: The American trucking industry has a strong advocate in Washington and that person is Elizabeth Dole. My door will always be open to you.

I realize how much our nation depends on the motor carrier industry. Your industry's estimated annual gross revenue of \$190 billion and your seven million employees measure only a small part of your worth to the economy. You serve over 40,000 small communities, many in remote areas of the country, whose only access to commercial markets is provided by motor carriers. Together, you handle nearly 40 percent of the nation's total intercity freight traffic. These facts alone illustrate the importance of the motor carrier industry to America's economy.

In President Reagan's first Administration we brought about several changes to strengthen the transportation backbone of our economy. The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 provided substantial new federal funding to begin a major rebuilding of the nation's highways and bridges. That Act also removed barriers to the operation wider trucks and "double bottoms" on major highways in every state in the union and we are beginning to see increased productivity for segments of the motor carrier industry as a result. We have worked for some time now to reach accord with states that were not receptive to double bottoms and to produce a 181,000 mile system of highways to safely accommodate them. We will continue to work with you to assure access for the heavier, wider and larger commercial trucks. Those trucks will bring even greater productivity. Of that I am confident. But I am equally certain of our mutual commitment to safety on the highway and I thank you for your support in the safety belt campaign.

My overriding commitment to transportation safety will not change. The Motor Carrier Safety Act of 1984 was enacted late in the last session of Congress, and we have already begun work on implementing it. We met with the Interstate Commerce Commission on a new safety fitness rating scheme. We are examining a proposal to deal with many of the questions raised in your discussion and I can assure you the Act will be enforced fairly and uniformly.

Fair taxation is a moral imperative. Tax equity is a goal for which we will continue to strive. Congress made adjustments in the truck tax in 1983 and again last year. The change from an upfront lump sum payment to a "pay as you go" system will ease the tax burden on operators of heavy trucks. Nevertheless, I understand your concerns -- quite eloquently and thoughtfully expressed in the last hour -- and I will continue to monitor the tax equity situation.

I share your concern too that funds paid into the Highway Trust Fund be distributed in a timely fashion. More than \$7 billion in Interstate construction and other funds have not been distributed to the states because of a continuing Congressional impasse. On January 14 I submitted emergency legislation to Congress, calling for immediate release of these funds. I want you to know the President supports me in this legislation. He wants these funds released.

Now, at the beginning of the second Reagan Administration, I am convinced America is at the threshold of a refreshing new era of economic freedom. Bold strokes already taken have reaped handsome dividends. The beautiful constancy about America, its people, its free enterprise system has been its ability to adjust to sweeping change. Your industry's response to the triple events of recession, fuel price increases and reduced regulation is proof of your own resilience. The motor carrier industry is on the way back, fueled in part by lower energy prices which are a dividend of the free market. Your own conservation efforts combined with removal of regulatory constraints helped to start the downward movement of fuel prices.

In our vibrant market more and more firms are restructuring their manufacturing, marketing and distribution systems to cut costs. The new emphasis places a premium on good transportation services. As Tom Donohue told the National Industrial Transportation League last November, "the trucking industry must stand ready to employ more creative methods to improve the asset productivity of its customers, the shippers." I say the trucking industry will meet and exceed the challenge in a free market environment and the ultimate beneficiary of this productivity will be the American consumer. I stand ready to assist in the process.

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