



PARTNERSHIP TO Save Highway Communities

July 13, 2009

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
Chair
Committee on Environment and Public
Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe
Ranking Republican
Committee on Environment and Public
Works
United States Senate
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Boxer and Inhofe:

On behalf of the Partnership to Save Highway Communities, we are writing to ask that the Committee on Environment and Public Works preserve an important public policy initiative as part of the expected extension of current law, SAFETEA-LU (P.L. 109-59). Specifically, we are requesting that the legislation maintain the prohibition of commercial activity on the interstate right-of-way, as set forth in Section 111 of Title 23, United States Code. Allowing state governments to unfairly compete with private businesses for the services of interstate motorists will risk thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in tax revenue as it would certainly close businesses at interstate exits. In these difficult economic times, such a policy change could further damage the economies of small cities and towns across the country which rely on interstate traffic to sustain their local communities.

The Partnership to Save Highway Communities is a coalition of businesses and organizations that rely upon the economic activity provided by interstate highway motorists. The coalition consists of restaurants, gas stations and truckstops that serve motorists, the blind entrepreneurs who manage highway vending services, and community-based organizations that rely on the tax revenues provided by those services. Businesses like ours have been providing these services to motorists since the inception of the Interstate Highway System, when Congress saw the necessity

for a diverse network of businesses along these new highways to meet the needs of the traveling public. At the rest areas themselves, more than 600 blind business owners earn a living and support their families servicing rest stop vending operations.

As you are well aware, the results of the prohibition of commercial activity on the interstate right-of-way have been undeniably successful, with tens of thousands of small businesses generating billions of dollars in annual sales at interstate exists nationwide. In many rural communities, interstate-based businesses serve as the primary contributor of sales tax and property tax revenue, funding public schools, police departments and fire protection services. The businesses also play a vital role in the community, donating time and resources to various charitable causes and often serve as the gateway to a small town for motorists exiting off of the interstate. Allowing state-run rest areas to compete with these businesses on an unfair playing field will remove a valuable component to the economic development of these counties and towns.

Recently, several state departments of transportation have cited the need to commercialize their rest areas to meet budgetary shortfalls. Such commercial activity will only serve to transfer tax revenue from local communities to the state, while also threatening the jobs and businesses of those who invested with the guarantee that the interstate would remain free of commercial development. Commercialized rest areas would reduce economic activity along the Interstate Highway System, not enhance it. Furthermore, commercialization would deprive blind entrepreneurs of critical business opportunities, eliminating the demand for the products offered by these vendors.

As the Committee moves forward with legislation to temporarily strengthen the Highway Trust Fund, we request that you forego any attempt made to weaken the ban on commercial services at interstate highway rest areas. Doing so will preserve a well-reasoned policy initiative that has benefited thousands of communities across the country and provides valuable services to highway passengers.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

The Partnership to Save Highway Communities

Association of Kentucky Fried Chicken Franchisees (AKFCF)
Blind Entrepreneurs Alliance
Brinker International (Chili's, Maggiano's and On the Border Restaurants)
Burger King Corporation

Coalition of Franchisee Associations
International Pizza Hut Franchise Holders Association
McDonald's Corporation
National Association of Convenience Stores (NACS)
National Association of Shell Marketers (NASM)
National Franchisee Association (Burger King Franchisees)
NATSO, Representing America's Travel Plazas and Truckstops
OSI Restaurant Partners, LLC (Outback Steakhouse, Carrabba's, Roy's, Bonefish Grill and
Fleming's Restaurants)
Petroleum Marketers Association of America (PMAA)
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America (SIGMA)
Star Franchise Association (Carl's Jr. Franchisees)
Taco Bell Franchise Management Advisory Council
American Petroleum Institute (API)

CC: Members, Committee on Environment and Public Works