

# U.S. extends Mexico truck program, Teamsters blast DOL

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Teamsters President James Hoffa blasted the U.S. Department of Transportation for “illegally extending” a program that allows long-haul trucks from Mexico full access to U.S. highways.

The Teamsters, AFL-CIO, consumer groups and members of Congress have opposed the program since it was implemented under the North American Free Trade Agreement. Prior to NAFTA, trucks from Mexico were limited to no more than 25 miles from the border, where goods were then transferred onto American trucks.

According to Reuters, 10 U.S. carriers, with 55 trucks, and 27 Mexican carriers, with 107 trucks, have participated in the pilot program that began shortly after Labor Day last year.

“In reality, it’s the first step toward unfettered access for trucks from anywhere south of the border,” Hoffa said.

Shortly after the pilot program was launched, Congress passed a law closing the border to trucks that didn’t meet U.S. safety standards.

“But the Bush Administration simply ignores the law,” Hoffa said.


Rep. Peter DeFazio, (D-Ore.), chair of the House Highways subcommittee, issued a blistering statement after he learned about the plan to keep the border open. “This Administration has been hell-bent on opening up our border but over the past year has failed to show they can adequately inspect Mexican carriers while also maintaining a robust U.S. safety inspection program,” DeFazio said. “There is no reason to believe these problems will be addressed over the next two years. The safety of the traveling public must come first — before the Administration’s fantasies about free trade.”

Just before Congress recessed in August, a bill sponsored by DeFazio was unanimously approved in the House Transportation Committee shutting down the pilot program by Sept. 6.

That followed action by the Senate Appropriations Committee, which on July 10 approved an amendment banning all programs to open the border to long-haul trucks from Mexico.

To My  
Good Friends in  
Organized Labor

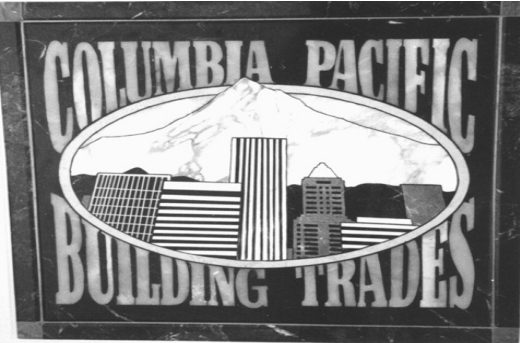
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times to our many friends in the labor movement.**

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