

Only 11% of more than 20,000 motor carrier violations in 1998 resulted in fines, and the average settlement per enforcement case decreased from \$3,700 to \$1,600 from 1995 to 1998.

The General Accounting Office and the DOT Inspector General have issued several highly critical reports on the Motor Carrier Office. A third independent review commissioned by the Department of Transportation and led by former Congressman Norm Mineta also concluded that DOT motor carrier safety operations need to be improved and more effectively managed.

Mr. Speaker, this Motion does not address the issue of where the Office of Motor Carriers should be located within the Department of Transportation. Last year, the distinguished gentleman from Virginia was thwarted in his efforts to transfer the Office of Motor Carrier Safety from the Federal Highway Administration to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Last year, we passed a bill to do just that, but the provision was deleted in conference. This year, various proposals have been introduced to create a new Motor Carrier Administration within DOT. I do not know precisely what the right answer is on how this office should be organized in DOT.

I do know, however, that the safety of the American traveling public is at stake, and that the public interest—not special interests—should govern federal oversight of truck safety. Regardless of how we change the boxes on the organizational chart, we need real reform in the Office of Motor Carriers that focuses on increased truck inspections, more safety reviews and compliance audits; improved accident data collection and information systems; increased border inspectors; additional research; and stronger accountability. Additional resources are needed to do the job.

This Motion to Instruct simply recognizes that getting dangerous, speeding and unsafe trucks off the roads should be one of the highest priorities in this bill and we must provide the funding needed to ensure that the DOT has an aggressive safety and enforcement program. I urge the adoption of the Motion to Instruct and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF).

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO) for the motion because I think if it is carried and it is followed through, it will end up saving a lot of lives.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO) that instructs the conferees to provide maximum funding within the scope of conference for the Office of Motor Carriers. As the body knows, the House-passed bill provides 70.5 million for motor carriers operations. The level is more than 17 million over the fiscal year 1999 enacted level and 15 million more than the Senate passed bill. These funds are needed for critical improvements in crash data, safety system/data base modernization, census information, incident management, and post accident training.

In addition, these funds will provide for additional inspectors to better the enforcement and compliance program and improve motor carrier safety. And lastly, the funds will provide additional resources to address the delay in the backlog of critical safety regulations including those relating to hours of service.

In short, these funds are needed, and I thank the gentleman from Minnesota for his leadership to improve the safety of the motoring public and to eliminate unsafe trucks in the Nation's highway. However, Mr. Speaker, this subcommittee has been concerned now for over a year that the Office of Motor Carriers in its current structure and placement in the Federal Highway Administration is not performing an aggressive enforcement and compliance program. It cannot do so within the Federal Highway Administration.

A recent Inspector General report found that only 2.5 percent of the interstate motor carriers were reviewed and 64 percent of the Nation's carriers did not have a safety rating. The number of compliance reviews has fallen by 30 percent, 30 percent, since 1995. The amount of fines from unsafe trucking companies has fallen to the lowest level in 1992.

Without a more aggressive and effective program, the General Accounting Office predicts fatalities. People will die. It could rise as high as 6,000 next year. Trucking fatalities reached a decade high of nearly 5,400 in 1997 and remained essentially flat in 1998. This equates to a major airline accident every 2 weeks with about 200 fatalities.

In comparison, other modes of transportation have seen a decline in fatalities, a rising tide of deaths; and lax oversight of the trucking industry are partially a result of the Office of Motor Carrier Placement within the Federal Highway Administration. Their primary mission, Federal Highway, is to award some 25 billion in highway construction funds to the States not to improve safety. Federal Highway is skilled at building and maintaining roads but done a poor job with regard to an effective and forceful truck safety program.

Eclipsed by the agency of over 2,400 staff and 50 division offices, several regional office centers, the Office of Motor Carriers and its safety mission will act as strong focus and is subjugated to second-class status in the Federal Highway Administration. Some personnel within the Office of Motor Carriers have become too close to the trucking industry once they have been charged with regulating. In fact, earlier this year the Inspector General found out the personnel had solicited the trucking industry to generate opposition.

It is for these reasons that the committee also included in its version of the bill section 2335 that prohibits

funds in the act from being used to carry out the functions and operations of the Office of Motor Carriers within Federal Highway. The Department of Transportation Inspector General, the chairman of National Transportation Safety Board, trucking representatives, the enforcement community, and safety advocates all agree that the Office of Motor Carriers should be moved from the Federal Highway Administration. The committee has included this provision so that the appropriate authorizing committees could report legislation that reforms the Office of Motor Carriers.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, the House passed this provision in June. Here it is September 21, and regrettably neither the House nor the Senate has yet to pass a comprehensive reform of the Office of Motor Carriers. Time is running out. More than 18 months have passed since the subcommittee sounded the alarm that the Office of Motor Carriers needed to be reformed. The American public has waited too long.

So when we are conferencing with the Senate, we will ask that the conferees seek the highest level of funding, as the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO) wisely has sought for the Office of Motor Carriers and also insist on the House position, section 335, to ensure the funding for the Office of Motor Carriers is spent effectively and reduces the deaths on the highways.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO) for this and for all of his efforts with regard to safety on FAA, but particularly on this one, and I support the motion.

Mr. SABO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. SABO).

The motion was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the Chair appoints the following conferees: Messrs. WOLF, DELAY, REGULA, ROGERS, PACKARD, CALLAHAN, TIAHRT, ADERHOLT, Ms. GRANGER, Messrs. YOUNG of Florida, SABO, OLVER, PASTOR, Ms. KILPATRICK, and Messrs. SERRANO, FORBES and OBEY.

There was no objection.

#### RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until approximately 5 p.m.