

JERRY PETROWSKI

WISCONSIN STATE SENATOR

Senate Bill 279

September 5, 2013

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for this opportunity to discuss Senate Bill 279.

This bill may seem like familiar territory to committee members after the recent passage of Act 34 (SB 135) addressing use of Michigan configured log trucks on a portion of Highway 2 in Florence County and the creation of several longer Michigan truck routes in the state budget.

Current law allows trucks carrying forestry products that may be legally operated in the state of Michigan to be operated on Wisconsin roadways within eleven miles of the Wisconsin-Michigan border and on a number of approved state routes beyond the eleven mile border area. These trucks are larger than would otherwise be allowed under Wisconsin law, and operate under what is generally referred to as the “Michigan border permit.” However, under current law, the permits apply to different types of forestry products and allow different weight limits depending on which route a truck is operating on.

For example, if you are operating on Highway 139, you are explicitly allowed to haul sawed lumber, but it’s unclear if you could haul biomass, while if you were operating on Highway 2, the exact opposite is true.

This bill makes the different types of forestry commodities that can be transported uniform on all applicable routes and sets a uniform weight allowance under the Michigan border permit. This will eliminate confusion for both truckers and law enforcement operating on these routes.

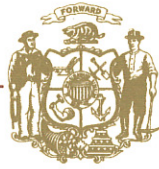
The bill also adds one additional route outside the eleven mile corridor on Highway 8 from the border with Michigan to the intersection with Highway 139. The additional route has been reviewed and approved by the Department of Transportation and will allow access to an additional sawmill near Goodman, Wisconsin, as well as providing more efficient access to rail lines in Northern Michigan.

As we are all aware, the forest products industry has struggled for many years to meet growing competition from Canada and China. This bill will clarify our current regulations and take one more step toward leveling the playing field with our foreign competitors.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill today. I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.

29TH SENATE DISTRICT

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Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Bill 279 – Timber Product Trucking Routes & Weights

Senate Committee on Transportation, Public Safety, and Veterans and Military Affairs

By Representative Jeff Mursau

September 5, 2013

Chairman Petrowski and Committee Members,

Thank you for scheduling a hearing on SB 279, legislation extending and modifying Michigan-Wisconsin 11-mile border permit routes.

As you may know, both Michigan and Wisconsin have a significant interest in the legal and consistent transport of goods across state lines and there are a number of programs, permits and laws in Wisconsin that recognize that interest. The 11-mile border permit program is designed to encourage the trade of raw forest products between Michigan and Wisconsin while recognizing vehicle and road design differences between the two states.

After checking with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, I have found that there are no significant reasons why the road design on US Highway 8 in Forest County between Cavour and Pembine can't handle the same traffic as US Highway 8 west of Cavour or north of Pembine.

In Goodman, there is a mill that employs a significant number of people in the surrounding community and produces a significant amount of economic activity that helps ensure the sustainable management of Wisconsin forests. Besse Forest Products employs more than 150 people and another 350 people in Mattoon, Rice Lake and Ladysmith.

Rail service by Canadian National Railroad intends to sell its rail spur in the area to a private rail firm. Besse expects its rail switching fees to rise. This makes efficient trucking routes all the more important to Besse, its employees and the citizens of the community.

Chairman Petrowski and Committee members, Besse Forest Products and the forest products industry are economic drivers in northern Wisconsin. SB 279 will help ensure Besse and all citizens who depend on a reliable stream of fiber continue to make a living in Forest County.

Thank you again for hearing this bill today, I am happy to take any questions you might have.

September 5, 2013

TO: Chairman Jerry Petrowski and

Members of the Senate Transportation Committee

RE: Support for Senate Bill 279

Chairman Petrowski and members of the Committee, my name is Joe Rademacher, and I am the Director of Standing Timber for Besse Forest Products Group.

Besse is a family owned business founded in 1966, primarily engaged in the production of hardwood lumber and veneer. We operate production facilities in Goodman, Rice Lake, Ladysmith and Mattoon, Wisconsin; and we directly employ more than 500 people.

Our products are shipped throughout North America and we export finished goods to China, Mexico, and Vietnam.

A significant portion of our raw material and finished goods are transported utilizing semi-trailers, and this bill would help provide financial relief from steadily increasing freight costs.

Larger payloads would also translate into fewer trucks, which would almost certainly help ease traffic and congestion at and near our production facilities in Goodman.

We respectfully request the Committee approve this legislation as proposed by Senator Petrowski and Representative Mursau.

Thank you

Joe Rademacher
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