



HOWARD MARKLEIN

STATE SENATOR • 17TH SENATE DISTRICT

January 8, 2020

**Senate Committee on Transportation, Veterans & Military Affairs
Testimony on Senate Bill 558**

Good afternoon!

Thank you Chair Petrowski and committee members for hearing Senate Bill 558 (SB 558), which allows a county to enact an ordinance requiring registration of animal drawn vehicles used primarily for transportation.

Rep. Kulp and I worked on a similar proposal last session. It is important to note that SB 558 allows a county to enact an ordinance, but does not require any county to take action on this issue.

In many rural communities, our roads are shared by regular traffic, agricultural implements, commercial trucks and animal-drawn vehicles. Unfortunately, several of our communities have experienced difficulty in managing the animal-drawn vehicle traffic, especially when there is an accident or damage to the road. It is currently very difficult to identify individual animal-drawn vehicles and address the owners and operators of these vehicles.

This bill allows a county to pass an ordinance to create county-registration of animal drawn vehicles primarily used for transportation. The bill also sets a maximum annual flat registration fee of no greater than \$100. If the animal drawn vehicle is normally kept in a town, and the county enacts an ordinance, 50% of the registration fee would go to the town. Any revenue received from the registration fee must be used for transportation-related expenses or the actual administrative costs related to collection of the fee.

We are concerned about the safety of everyone who uses our roads, and have heard from local law enforcement that registering animal drawn vehicles will help them identify the owners of the vehicle if it is involved in an accident.

SB 558 is supported by both the Wisconsin Counties Association and the Wisconsin Towns Association.

Thank you again for hearing SB 558, and your timely action on the bill.

Position against passage of Senate Bill 558

My name is Kathleen Jackson and I represent the Wisconsin Horse Council as well as the Wisconsin Morgan Horse Club. I would like to voice my opposition to passage of Senate Bill 558 for the following reasons:

This bill is clearly directed solely toward Amish families across Wisconsin, especially in areas with larger concentrations of these individuals. It reflects discrimination for these folks who do pay income and property taxes, and who also contribute substantially to local economies. These families are self-sufficient, do not receive public support, and are peaceful non-violent people.

In recent interviews with several families in the Kingston area, I inquired whether they were aware of the proposed passage of this legislation. Not one of them was aware of it and none of them had been approached to discuss the details or logistics of the proposal. Issues of concern centered around sharing the roads safely and respecting one another on the roads, regardless of cultural and religious differences between Amish and "English" communities. Examples of road rage, bullying on the road, attempts to scare horses by driving too fast or too close, and essentially running them off the road were mentioned. One mother mentioned she saw lots of auto and truck drivers talking on and working with their cell phones while sharing the roads with her family. She also noted there are more accidents these days on local roads. As we know many times there are young children in the carriages with their parents or elder siblings. What efforts have been made to adequately inform these folks of the bill and the effect it would have on their lives?

I can hardly believe these individuals would object to contributing their fair share to road use. What is the plan for registering vehicles, monitoring license plates and titles similar to what we who use cars and trucks? What are the detailed logistics of this proposal?

I also took notice of the condition of the roads in the area I visited. They were definitely no worse off than our immediate roads, sometimes even better. It has been YEARS since adequate road repairs have been carried out in our Dane Co. area as well as across the state. This proposal will suddenly solve the problem

of road conditions? That is highly doubtful. The Senate needs to address road building and maintenance in all areas and it goes well beyond targeting Amish for road usage. More discussion is needed with a problem solving attitude instead of the punitive one that is overtly present in this bill.

Mr. Chairman and Senators

I am supporting bill 558 because of my deep concern of the damage being caused by animal drawn vehicles.

I live in a small town in Green Lake County, specifically the Town of Marquette. Our town has approximately 400 residents spread over 40 square miles. We have 25 miles of road with 31 different roads to maintain. That may not sound like much but it's a daunting task because our road budget for the entire year is approximately \$90,000.

We are a farm community with residential property owners. According to the 2010 census by next year more than 60% of our residents will be 65 years of age or older. We have raised taxes, with the proper procedures 3 times in the last 6 years. I told you all that because you have to understand that the amount of animal draw vehicles in our town has gone up 500%.

About 2 years ago the town reconstructed a 1.2 mile section of Puckaway Road. This road is more than 5 miles long. It's our main road on the west end of the township. The cost was almost \$300,000 dollars. We had to borrow the money to do that section. Within the last year we had severe wear caused by animal drawn vehicles to our new section of the road. That area prior to the replacement lasted 40 years. I doubt if we will get half that time because of the issue before us. I have pictures to show you the wear and I'd like to present them to you.

The public has a right to use all roads that are not private and everyone should be able to use them without risk of being in danger. Poorly maintained roads because the municipality cannot afford to raise more revenue becomes a serious issue that can be life threatening. The smaller communities like ours who have had an influx of animal drawn vehicles cannot afford to resurface much less maintain 31 roads over 25 miles. It's impossible. The horses pulling animal drawn vehicles have horse shoes with studs causing severe damage. Studded tires went out 50 years ago.

In closing we have regulation on virtually everything that uses our common roadways. Cars, trucks, vans, semi's, farm vehicles, snowmobiles, recreational vehicles, and construction equipment. We have weight, height, length, axel restriction on vehicles, along with laws on littering and dumping. It astounds me that the animal drawn vehicles on our roads have no identification or registration.

I am certain the constituents of counties that see this problem daily agree this matter must be addressed and a solution should be immediate. It does no good to ignore the issue it will not just go away. **Everyone has to have skin in the game**

Please pass bill 558

Thank you

Phil Anastasi
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BOB KULP

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Senate Committee on Transportation, Veterans and Military Affairs

FROM: Representative Bob Kulp

RE: Support For Senate Bill 558 / County Registration of Animal-Drawn Vehicles

DATE: January 8, 2020

Thank you Chair Petrowski, Vice-Chair Marklein and fellow committee members for holding a public hearing today on Senate Bill 558 ("SB 558"). I appreciate having the opportunity to express my support for SB 558 relating to county registration of animal-drawn vehicles.

There has been a spike in our district in Amish buggy accidents causing 9 deaths in the past several years. Several county boards in our area including Wood, Clark, and Jackson County have proposed regulations to the Amish Community in regards to their Amish buggies. It is important to ensure that the rights of the Amish are respected while also understanding the perspective of our local governments, who are concerned with the safety of everyone who uses the roads. Local law enforcement has informed us that registering animal-drawn vehicles will help them identify the owners of animal drawn vehicles, which in turn will help them enforce safety standards on the roads we all use.

Current law, allows a county, town village or city to enact an ordinance to collect an annual registration fee for motor vehicles that weigh less than 8,000 pounds and are customarily kept in the county, town, village or city. This bill will allow a county, if they so choose, to begin registering animal-drawn vehicles which use the roads in that county. The county will be able to charge up to a \$100 registration fee, which can be used for administration of the registration process and/or other transportation needs.

SB 558 is supported by the Wisconsin Towns Association. I respectfully ask committee members to join me in supporting SB 558. Thank you again for scheduling the public hearing today, and thank you for your time and consideration.

REPRESENTING WISCONSIN'S 69TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT