

Hello my name is Ingrid Brown-Bell and my husband Keith and I are Independent Owner Operators with our own authority. We are a team operation and operate throughout 48 states. In response to the reform of the current Hours of Service for Drivers my comments not only speak for myself but also for my partner/spouse and our company. Upon reviewing the prior to January 1, 2004 changes it is quite obvious that there is and will never be a 100% way to obtain complete submission of 3.2 million professional truck drivers that are affected. It is as an example of a speeder who chooses to speed, you can't stop it prior but only after the fact. It is as those that choose to drive while intoxicated, many can be detained prior but so many are only detained afterward. It is a fact of life and only "being human" that somewhere someone will find a way to "work" the system and find loop holes in laws and regulations. Now I know you are WELL aware of this and it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know this but it HAS to be a factor in the decisions to be made with this issue.

By running a husband and wife team and averaging 6000 miles per week we have found that the current hours of service work well with exception of not being able to split our 14 hour breaks for showers, meals, personal time together and restroom breaks not only for ourselves but to exercise and enjoy our puppy. (You may think this shouldn't matter but please listen too me out) These personal times and times with our "little member" of our family brings what LITTLE bit of normalcy to our lives as you each live daily. Running 6000 miles a week means that it is majorily spent driving, sleeping, fueling and maintaining our equipment. By being Independent Owner Operators there has to be time to complete Fuel Taxes and Book loads and take care of administrative work. It might take 1-2 hours sometimes and this time is broken into my 14 hours so as I can not produce the driving time that I need to but have the health and ability to do. HERE IS AN HONEST 100% statement that most would never admit to but for instance my husband when he is driving the night shift gets sleepy about 2 hours before or at the time of sunrise so he chooses to stop and take a 2 hour rest period or nap(which as we know is deducted from his 14 of on duty) and therefore gets past the "MORNING RISING" period. What can you say is wrong with this it is a safety issue he is addressing? Do you ever rest on Sunday afternoon on your sofa as you are JUST ready for a nap? It is really a common sense question and answer. As I stated NO MATTER what rules you put into place even with a black box, those that want to will and can find a way to be dishonest.

We both have 100% clean safety records and only do this job 100% safe as to keep the love of our profession where it needs to be. We comply as required due to this is the law that has been set. But is it a law made and set by a majority that has lived or does live this way of life to fully understand the minute intricate workings.

A question I have is if there is a doubt about safety why can a team drive 5 hours on duty/driving and 5 hours off duty/sleeper? If you will try this yourself just for a 24 hour period at home and see what reaction your body and mind have at the end of the trial period. Decide to start your 5 on/5 off in the middle of the day (this will represent the unknown time a team may be dispatched on their load). Go to bed at this time whether you are sleepy or not, set your clock and rise in EXACTLY 5 hours and prepare yourself with your hygiene and such and begin work for EXACTLY 5 hours (document your production during this 5 hours EVERY MOVE YOU MAKE EVEN RESTROOM BREAK) then return immediately back to bed for EXACTLY 5 more hours and continue this schedule for 24 hours or even for a week or a month. This is a total EXHAUSTING routine. WHY NOT ADDRESS THESE PROBLEMS instead of those that ARE WORKING for the majority??????? This is allowed in the current hours but someone can't stop and take a 2-4 hour sleep period without loosing time in the end? Hmmm

Does anyone realize the freeze it will place on the nation if hours of service of shortened due to the productivity that it takes to fulfill the daily needs? Not only how many more trucks will be needed and placed on our highways to accomodate these needs? This increases the percentage of chance for incidence for each additional truck placed inservice.

Also place yourself on a 24 schedule that has to be EXACT of times when and where you are DICTATED to produce your EVERY living breathing movement.....then see why there is such a turn over in this industry and why there is such a safety issue.

There a minority that are speaking out AGAINST the trucking industry that haven't a clue what is really going on around them...What about the concern of our law inforcement officers that work 12 HOUR SHIFTS and are expected to drive at high rates of speed after 11 or 12 hours? Or those that are short in their department so as to work a double shift a total of 24 hours so as to continue service to our country? What about a Firefighter that, as I hold in high regard as law enforcement and have worked in this field know, work 24 hours on and 24 hours off? It is also a concern of traveling salesmen who are allowed to drive and travel AS MANY hours as THEY desire as to make commission to make a living? WHO DICTATES TO THESE? Or is it that we HAVE TO let these areas perform as they wish so as to make sure others are provided for? What does a professional driver provide for our country? What if there wasn't the necessities for these to work with?

My point here is we all have to do what we are required and expected to do as to provide a service to those in need. And I don't understand why the professional truck driver is placed in such scrutiny as not to be allowed to be a part of this chain. When is the belittlement going to stop??????

TRUCK DRIVERS ARE NOT ALLOWED BY THE LAWS PLACED ON US TO EVEN BEGIN TO KNOW WHAT ANYTHING NORMAL IN DAILY LIVING IS!!!!!!!!!!!!

It becomes as an inmate becomes institutionalized and can't return to function in society as a "normal" citizen.

The trucking industry is the HEART of this NATION as you are well aware and without the dedication and unselfish acts of the professional driver you nor I would have the life we choose.

I ask you to look around you right now at this very moment and see that there is NOTHING, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING that you can't touch that wasn't transported by a truck in one way or another. And ask yourself do you have the dedication and perseverance to do the job that is required to supply the demand that you and others place for your personal needs and desires? To stay away from your family and loved ones for extended periods of time...miss your childs first steps or words or the loss of a spouse or parent???? We are just as human as the next but we make the sacrifice unselfishly and giving so as others can live in return. Are you willing to give to this extent?

It is simple the rules MUST fit to be safe (As the current ones do)but they also MUST fit to allow each driver the means to live as you and your family with a peace of mind that they do and are respected enough to allow them to be an individual and provide for themselves and those they serve.

Please consider bringing onboard to a committee some of these dedicated, experienced and educated professional truck drivers so as to bring the realities to the eyes of those that are blinded by the light.

Thank you and my deepest apologizes for the length and only wish that someone reads this to the extent and end of my comments.

Sincerely and GOD BLESS,
Keith and Ingrid Bell
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