



Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association

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Dear Members of Congress:

Many of you spent 2020 praising truckers, even referring to them as heroes and essential to our way of life. We agree with that completely, but your actions do not even remotely reflect your words.

Small-business truckers are struggling to stay afloat. You just spent another \$900,000,000,000 to help Americans through the pandemic, \$45,000,000,000 of which is to help the transportation industry. This includes \$14,000,000,000 for transit, \$1,000,000,000 for Amtrak, \$2,000,000,000 for private motor coaches, school buses and the ferry industry, \$10,000,000,000 for state highways, \$15,000,000,000 for airline payroll support, \$1,000,000,000 for airline contractor payrolls, and \$2,000,000,000 for airports and airport concessionaires.

What about trucking?

This is shameful. Some of these industries already received tens of billions of dollars earlier this year. To be clear, small-business truckers do not want a handout, but we are angered because small-business trucking faced an existential threat this year as well, especially when freight rates fell off a cliff in the spring and early summer.

We do not really know the full extent of the devastation COVID has had on the small-business trucking industry, but we know thousands or even tens of thousands of carriers have or will go under. There are other reasons for that aside from COVID, but Congress has done almost nothing to help. In fact, you had all year to provide meaningful relief, but routinely prioritized other modes and other industries.

While the Paycheck Protection Program did provide some relief to the trucking industry, we heard from far too many small-business truckers who were unable to get a loan from the program. Many owner-operators were ineligible because of the way that loan eligibility was calculated. In other words, it was good for those fortunate enough to receive it, but left those who were ineligible even further behind.

I would conservatively say that hundreds of thousands of truck drivers worked countless hours of overtime this year. Guess how many were paid for that time? Very few. Why? Because Congress has exempted employee drivers from overtime wages. If you are serious about providing relief to the working class, repealing this dated exemption is a must.

You could have suspended the federal fuel tax, or the heavy-vehicle use tax, or even the Unified Carrier Registration tax to help truckers' cash flow. Or you could have tossed in a few hundred million dollars for truck parking projects, so more truckers would have a safe place to park while they work long hours. These are just a few of the ideas that we have conveyed to Congress to provide relief to small-business truckers.

And how did you respond? By providing tens of billions of dollars to virtually every other major mode of transportation except the one mode that literally drives our economy. And to add insult to injury, the House unabashedly voted to increase motor carriers' insurance requirements in the midst of the worst economic crisis most of our members have ever experienced – all for the financial gain of their trial lawyer political supporters. Let that sink in a moment – the House voted to dramatically increase the insurance costs of small-business truckers during a historic economic crisis, so their trial lawyer friends could bring home bigger payouts when suing blue-collar workers. Is this how out-of-touch you've become?

If you truly believe truckers are heroes and essential to everyday life, you certainly have most of our members fooled.

We challenge you to prove them wrong in 2021.

There are only a few lawmakers who can legitimately claim they support small-business truckers. You know who you are, and we appreciate everything you have done. We hope the rest of you will take some time to meet with drivers, learn about issues that are important to them, and perhaps even find a way to help, especially when COVID is no longer an issue.

Thank you for your time. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this in more detail at your convenience. Please contact me directly at (816) 229-5791 or lewie_pugh@ooida.com with any questions or to schedule a meeting.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lewie Pugh". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Lewie Pugh
Executive Vice President
OOIDA