



From English Proficiency to Drug Testing: 4 Bills Pending in Congress Could Drive Big Changes in Trucking

Insights

9.18.25

Lawmakers in D.C. have recently introduced four bills that could significantly affect the trucking industry if enacted. Several of the proposals focus on driver safety and accountability, while another seeks to address runaway jury verdicts in trucking accident litigation by expanding federal jurisdiction to cover cases of catastrophic injury. These proposals highlight the competing priorities of safety, accountability, and workforce regulation. Here's a breakdown of the four measures currently on the table.

Connor's Law (H.R. 3608) – English Proficiency for Commercial Drivers

Connor's Law would require commercial motor vehicle operators to demonstrate sufficient English proficiency to converse with the public, understand road signs, respond to official inquiries, and complete written reports. Drivers who fail to meet the standard could be declared out of service. Federal regulations already require English proficiency for CDL drivers, but this bill would codify the requirement into statute and remove discretion from enforcement officers in handling violations.

Why it Matters

Currently, violators of the federal regulation may be fined, but the proposed legislation would require that they be taken off the road until compliant. Motor carriers employing drivers with limited English skills would face new compliance challenges, and enforcement could restrict portions of the current driver workforce.

Supporters Say...

Proponents argue this measure enhances safety and communication on US highways.

Opponents Say...

Industry analysts caution that strict language requirements could sideline a meaningful share of drivers – potentially numbering in the hundreds of thousands – placing additional strain on recruiting and intensifying already tight labor shortages. Industry groups also emphasize that existing federal regulations already require drivers to demonstrate English proficiency and have

argued for more consistent enforcement at the state level, rather than creating new statutory mandates.

Legislative status

The bill has been referred to the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit.

Safer Truckers Act of 2025 (S. 2690) – Residency and Work Authorization Requirements for CDLs

This Senate bill would restrict commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) to US citizens, lawful permanent residents, and non-citizens with explicit U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services authorization to work as commercial drivers. The bill also requires states to prepare an annual report to the Secretary of Transportation outlining policies and actions taken to enforce existing federal regulations regarding English proficiency.

Why it Matters

The legislation could significantly narrow the pool of eligible drivers at a time when the industry faces persistent labor shortages. Employers would need to carefully review work authorization status before hiring drivers and adjust recruiting practices accordingly.

Opponents Say...

Analysts note that tightening residency and authorization rules could sharply reduce the available workforce, driving up competition for qualified drivers, pushing wages higher, and potentially triggering capacity crunches similar to past regulatory shocks.

Legislative status

The bill has been referred to the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse Public Safety Improvement Act of 2025 (H.R. 4320) – Expanding Drug Testing Reporting

This bill would allow positive hair drug test results – conducted by accredited laboratories using approved devices – to be submitted to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse. The Secretary of Transportation would be tasked with issuing regulations within one year to implement the change.

Why it Matters

Hair testing has long been debated as a more effective method of detecting long-term drug use compared to urinalysis. Mandating its inclusion in the Clearinghouse would heighten compliance

obligations for carriers and could result in more disqualifications, further tightening the available driver pool.

Supporters Say...

Leading industry trade groups, including the American Trucking Associations and the Trucking Alliance, generally support stricter drug testing, emphasizing that all commercial for-hire truck drivers – not just CDL holders – should be subject to consistent standards to ensure safety and fairness across the industry. Supporters argue that expanding reporting to include hair test results strengthens the integrity of the existing system by identifying habitual drug use that urinalysis may miss.

Legislative status

The bill has been referred to the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit.

FAIR Trucking Act (H.R. 5268) – Federal Jurisdiction Over Trucking Accident Litigation

The Forum Accountability and Integrity in Roadway Trucking Act would grant federal district courts original jurisdiction over certain highway accident cases involving interstate motor carriers, provided the amount in controversy exceeds \$5 million and the parties are from different states or countries.

Why it Matters

This measure seeks to centralize high-stakes trucking accident litigation in federal courts and curb so-called “nuclear verdicts” by reducing forum shopping in plaintiff-friendly state courts. For carriers, the shift could offer a more predictable litigation environment but may also increase the costs and complexity of defending claims at the federal level.

Importantly, while the bill would eliminate the requirement for complete diversity of citizenship in cases against motor carriers, it does not alter the long-standing “forum defendant rule.” As a result, carriers sued in state court in their home state would remain unable to remove the case to federal court.

Legislative status

The bill has been referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

Key Takeaway for Employers

While each of these bills is at an early stage, they collectively reflect an ongoing focus in Congress on trucking safety, driver qualifications, and litigation exposure. Importantly, the proposed English

proficiency and residency requirements could disqualify large segments of the current workforce and intensify driver shortages, with ripple effects on freight costs and supply chain reliability.

Conclusion

Motor carriers, logistics companies, and related employers should track these developments closely and begin evaluating how potential changes could affect recruiting, compliance, and litigation strategy. The best way to do so? Make sure you are subscribed to [Fisher Phillips' Insight system](#) to get the most up-to-date information directly to your inbox. Any questions may be directed to your Fisher Phillips attorney, the author of this Insight, or any attorney in our [Transportation and Supply Chain Industry Team](#).

Related People



Andrew Gallinaro
Partner
610.230.6107
Email

Service Focus

Employment Discrimination and Harassment
Litigation and Trials
Workplace Safety and Catastrophe Management
Immigration

Industry Focus

Transportation and Supply Chain