



## **U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-Miss.)**

04 December 2025

Mr. President, I rise to call attention to a critical safety issue that affects every American who travels our roads and highways.

Across the country, we are seeing a disturbing rise in deadly accidents involving large commercial trucks driven by individuals who should have never been behind the wheel to begin with – often foreign nationals in the country illegally who exploited weaknesses in our Commercial Driver’s License, or CDL, system.

We have seen the video of the horrific crash in Florida, where an undocumented immigrant driving an 18-wheeler made an illegal U-turn on the interstate, killing three Americans who should still be here with us today.

In mid-October, a semi-truck driver in California, in the United States illegally with an immigration detainer notice, was accused of being intoxicated when he slammed into multiple vehicles, killing three people and injuring several more.

Sadly, incidents like this are becoming far too common, and we must ask why.

The answer lies in failed policies. Under previous Democratic administrations, safety enforcement was weakened, loopholes were opened, and fraudulent CDL issuance went unchecked.

Under the Obama administration, inspectors were directed to issue citations rather than take unsafe commercial vehicle drivers completely off the road — a policy decision that has resulted in loss of life.

Meanwhile, open-border policies of prior administrations have allowed illegal immigrants to enter the United States freely, which, combined with lax federal oversight, has let some states issue CDLs without proper language or competency testing.

A Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration audit — prompted by President Trump — found that multiple states issue non-domiciled CDLs improperly to unqualified, often foreign drivers, even in some instances allowing them to keep licenses after their legal status expired.

In the Florida case, the FMCSA investigation revealed that the driver had failed the English-language proficiency test, answering only two out of 12 verbal questions correctly. Yet multiple states still allowed him to hold a valid CDL and operate a commercial vehicle on our roads.

The ongoing FMCSA audit revealed systemic violations by many states, including California, Washington, and New Mexico, that simply fail to follow federal laws or regulations as they issue CDLs, which has resulted in greater threats to public safety.

After Secretary Duffy's criticisms about California's lack of policy enforcement and threat to revoke federal funding, California announced the revocation of 17,000 CDLs that were given to immigrants without valid visas.

This means California has been allowing thousands of unqualified drivers to operate throughout the country.

I thank this administration and Secretary Duffy for taking action to hold states accountable for their mistakes.

While some states look the other way, my home state of Mississippi has tried to rein in this abuse in the trucking industry.

Mississippi has taken decisive action and, in just the last three months alone, has identified 85 illegal drivers and referred them to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The State of Mississippi does not issue non-domiciled licenses and strictly enforces English-language proficiency testing to keep our roads safe.

My state is doing its part, but states cannot do this alone. The federal government must close these loopholes and enforce the law.

As Chair of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development, I successfully included language in the Fiscal Year 2026 bill and report that builds upon the President's executive order to strengthen and enforce English proficiency requirements for commercial drivers.

I am also a proud cosponsor of Senator Marshall's Commercial Motor Vehicle English Proficiency Act, to ensure all applicants for CDLs must pass the English proficiency test — in English, and not in any other language.

This commonsense measure would help guarantee that all truck drivers can read traffic signs, communicate with law enforcement, and understand directions clearly and safely.

In addition, I have cosponsored Senator Moody's Safer Trucking Act, which restricts the issuance of CDLs to only U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and individuals who are authorized for employment by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

These are common sense reforms to restore integrity, accountability and safety to our highways.

At the same time, I commend the Trump administration for taking action on this front, particularly Secretary Noem and law enforcement officials who recently carried out Operation Midway Blitz.

This enforcement action led to the arrest of 223 illegal aliens, 146 of whom were truck drivers.

And just a few weeks ago, ICE announced the arrest of a man from Uzbekistan with a Pennsylvania CDL who was allowed in our country by the Biden administration even though he was wanted by the government in Uzbekistan because of his links to a terrorist organization.

Needless to say, seeing ICE and State law enforcement come together to make America's roads safer is a step in the right direction.

Republicans in the Senate — and this Administration — remain committed to protecting American lives and keeping our roads safe. One key to doing that is to ensure CDL holders are here legally and are proficient in the English language and can actually read the road signs.

Thank you, and I yield my time.

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