



ISSUES PAPER:

Strengthening Driver Qualification & Enforcement Standards

Source: ATA Letter to Congress, October 8, 2025

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Summary

The American Trucking Associations (ATA) is calling on Congress to address critical safety and compliance gaps in the commercial trucking industry. Recent fatal crashes have revealed weaknesses in driver vetting, training, and licensing—particularly around English Language Proficiency (ELP), cabotage violations, and Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT). ATA proposes six targeted reforms to improve oversight, standardize qualifications, and protect the integrity of U.S. carriers. These changes aim to enhance highway safety, ensure fair competition, and prevent unqualified or illegal operators from entering the industry.

Key Issues & Recommendations

1. English Language Proficiency (ELP)

- **Issue:** Drivers lacking ELP pose safety risks and enforcement challenges.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Codify the President's Executive Order on ELP to ensure uniform standards.
 - Require FMCSA to implement a standardized ELP test as part of the CDL process.

2. Entry-Level Driver Training (ELDT) & CDL Oversight

- **Issue:** Inconsistent training and licensing practices allow unqualified drivers into the workforce.
- **Recommendations:**
 - Require one year of standard driver's license experience before CDL eligibility (with exceptions for vetted programs).
 - Expand federal and state audits of CDL issuance and third-party testers.
 - Remove non-compliant training providers from FMCSA's Training Provider Registry (TPR) swiftly.

3. Cabotage Violations

- **Issue:** Illegal domestic freight movements by foreign drivers undermine U.S. carriers and suppress wages.
 - **Recommendations:**
 - Strengthen enforcement through USDOT and DHS coordination.
 - Use data-sharing to identify violations.
 - Impose meaningful penalties (fines, disqualification, loss of operating authority) for repeat offenders.
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Implications for Wisconsin Carriers

- **Safety:** Enhanced standards will reduce crash risks and improve highway safety.
 - **Compliance:** Carriers must ensure drivers meet new ELP and training requirements.
 - **Competitiveness:** Stronger cabotage enforcement protects Wisconsin carriers from unfair competition.
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WMCA members are encouraged to:

- Review internal hiring and training practices for alignment with proposed reforms.
 - Engage with state and federal representatives to support ATA's recommendations.
 - Monitor FMCSA and DHS actions on enforcement and registry updates.
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