

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State
Vermont State Archives

**Veto Message: Governor Kunin
1990 (H.767)**

An act relating to the length of tractor-trailer trucks.

STATE OF VERMONT
Executive Department.
Montpelier, Vt., June 27, 1990

The following communication relating to the veto of H. 767 was received from the Governor:

The Honorable Ralph Wright
Speaker of the House
State House
Montpelier, Vermont 05602

Dear Speaker Wright:

I am returning herewith to the House, unsigned and without my approval, Bill 767, entitled

An act relating to the length of tractor-trailer trucks.

I take this action because this bill, if enacted into law, would have an adverse impact on the safety of Vermont's state and town highways. I believe that the General Assembly passed this bill without fully recognizing the implications of the unrestricted nature of the increase in tractor-trailer length it would permit.

In simple terms, this bill would allow tractor-trailer combinations with an overall length of 65 feet to travel freely on all Vermont roads, regardless of the length of the trailer — and regardless of the width, grade, or curve of the road. Under current law, the same unrestricted freedom of travel is already available to tractor-trailer combinations in two circumstances: (1) when the overall length of the combination does not exceed 60 feet, regardless of the length of the trailer; and (2) when the overall length of the

combination is as long as 65 feet, but the length of the trailer 'does not exceed 45 feet' (23 V.S.A. § 1432(a)). Moreover, longer combinations, and even longer trailers, can also travel on Vermont's roads under current law, albeit only pursuant to special annual permits granted by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles for pre-approved routes.

By adding a full five feet to the overall length of tractor-trailer combinations and eliminating all restrictions on trailer length, this bill would essentially invite trailers that measure as long as 48 feet or even 53 feet — a full three to eight feet longer than currently allowed — to travel unrestrictedly anywhere on any Vermont road, no matter how narrow, steep, or winding.

I am aware that trailers of these longer lengths are becoming common around the country and are considered more economically efficient. However, in New England, no other state has yet given carte blanche to 53-foot trailers, and even as to 48-foot trailers, only Connecticut has allowed their unrestricted use. Moreover, this bill, while recognizing the importance of these longer trailers, fails to include any measure that might minimize their impact on the safety of Vermont's roads. Indeed, it does not include any of the safeguards imposed in other states — with straighter, flatter and wider roads — such as restricting longer trailers to designated highways, or limiting the distance from the towing hitch to the rear axle of the trailer to minimize the roadway width required in negotiating curves or intersections.

Finally, I believe that this bill was voted upon by the General Assembly with the understanding that it would open Vermont roads to trailers that are 48 feet long — not with the understanding that it would give free rein to trailers five feet longer than that. Before Vermont embarks on this new course, I believe that the General Assembly should have a full opportunity to explore all safety implications and issues relating to the use of 53-foot trailers on our state's unique roads.

During the past several years, we have made significant improvements to road safety in Vermont, and passage of this bill would undermine those efforts. I cannot in good conscience

approve a bill that I believe would diminish the safety of Vermont's roads.

Sincerely yours,
/s/ Madeleine M. Kunin,
Governor

**No record to override Governor's veto
H.767 1990**

Sources: *Journal of the House*, May 16, 1990 (pages 1247-1248)