
DIGEST

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HB 868 Original

2026 Regular Session

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Abstract: Specifies the requirements for brake equipment and safety chains for trailers and semi-trailers, eliminates the safety chain exemption for farm equipment, updates the weight thresholds, and clarifies the applicability of these regulations.

Present law (R.S. 32:341(C)) specifies the requirements for brake equipment on motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers, stipulating weight-based thresholds and breakaway brake systems. Requires that every trailer or semi-trailer weighing 3,000 lbs. or more be equipped with brakes that allow the towing driver to control, stop, and hold the trailer, and that automatically apply if the trailer accidentally breaks away.

Proposed law modifies present law by specifying that the brake requirements apply to trailers and semi-trailers used in commerce or that were originally manufactured with brakes. Requires that the brakes be designed in a way that can be applied by the driver towing a vehicle from its cab. Additionally, exempts semi-trailers, pole trailers, full trailers, or four-wheel pole trailers with a gross weight of 3,000 lbs. or less from being equipped with a braking system only if the sum of the gross axle weight of the towed vehicle does not exceed 40 percent of the sum of the gross axle weights of the towing vehicle.

Present law (R.S. 32:341(D)) requires that all motor vehicles, trailers, and semi-trailers made after Dec.31, 1962, and sold in this state have brakes on all wheels, except motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and semi-trailers under 1,500 lbs.

Proposed law modifies present law by changing the weight requirement for motorcycles, motor-driven cycles, and semi-trailers from 1,500 lbs. to a 3,000 lbs.

Present law (R.S. 32:341(G)) specifies that all sport, boating, or nonagricultural trailers and semi-trailers under 3,000 lbs. are not required to have brakes.

Proposed law modifies present law by changing the weight requirement from 3,000 lbs. to a gross weight between 6,000 and 7,000 lbs.

Present law (R.S. 32:384(A)) requires the drawbar connection between two vehicles when one is towing the other be strong enough to pull all the weight towed and provides certain feet requirements between vehicles.

Proposed law modifies present law by specifying the requirement applies to drawbar connection

between the two vehicles or implements of husbandry. Additionally, requires the drawbar connection be securely affixed in compliance with manufacturer's specifications. Specifies this includes installation of all required connection apparatuses to prevent unintentional detachment while in operation.

Present law (R.S. 32:384(D)) requires every trailer and semi-trailer with a loaded gross weight capacity of up to 6,000 lbs. be equipped with safety chains or an approved safety device approved by the office of state police.

Proposed law modifies present law by removing the weight maximum threshold of 6,000 lbs. Further exempts fifth-wheel devices mounted on truck tractors or comparable towing vehicles from being equipped with a safety chain or approved safety device.

Present law (R.S. 32:384(E)) requires the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections, office of state police to approve safety devices other than safety chains to be used when towing trailers and semi-trailers. Provides the criteria in approving of such safety devices.

Proposed law retains present law and adds a requirement that safety chains and other safety devices conform to the strength, attachment, and performance standards set forth by the Dept. of Public Safety and Corrections. Further requires that such devices be deemed sufficient to ensure the secure connection between the towing vehicle and the trailer or semitrailer in the event of a failure of the primary coupling device.

Present law (R.S. 32:385(A)(1)(a)) exempts farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment, including fertilizer tending units but excluding draglines and bulldozers, from width (R.S. 32:380), height (R.S. 32:381), length (R.S. 32:382) and trailers and towed vehicle (R.S. 32:384) requirements and authorizes such when used for normal farm purposes or transported up to 50 miles from their origin.

Proposed law removes the exemption from the requirements of present law (R.S. 32:384) and clarifies that the mileage language refers to air miles.

Proposed law requires trailers and semi-trailers used with farm vehicles to have a properly secured drawbar or other primary connection that meets manufacturer specifications to prevent accidental detachment.

(Amends R.S. 32:341(C), (D), and (G), 384(A) and (D), and 385(A)(1)(a); Adds R.S. 32:384(E)(3) and 385(A)(4))