
DIGEST

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HB 868 Reengrossed

2026 Regular Session

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Abstract: Specifies the requirements for brake equipment and safety chains for trailers and semitrailers, updates the weight thresholds, clarifies the applicability of these regulations, and provides for a private property exception to safety chain requirements.

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 semitrailers 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 semitrailers from 1,500 lbs. to a 3,000 lbs and requires motor vehicles, trailers, and semitrailers that were originally manufactured with brakes to be equipped with brakes upon all wheels.

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 not used in commerce 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. Clarifies that every trailer or semitrailer originally manufactured with safety chains or other safety devices must be equipped with safety chains or other safety devices. Further exempts fifth-wheel devices mounted on truck tractors or comparable towing vehicles from being equipped with a safety chain or approved safety device.

Proposed law limits the safety chain and safety device requirements to trailers and semitrailers originally manufactured with safety chains or other safety devices.

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 requires safety chains and other devices mandated by present law conform with manufacturer specifications or applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards. 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.

Proposed law provides that the safety chain and approved safety device requirements of proposed law shall not apply to any trailer, semitrailer, or vehicle operated exclusively on private property, or operated solely for the crossing of a public roadway between contiguous parcels of land owned or leased by the same person.

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 clarifies that the farm equipment exemption is applicable to the requirements of present law (R.S. 32:384(B), (C), and (E)(1) and (2)) and removes the reference to "air" miles from the fifty mile distance limitation.

Proposed law requires trailers, semitrailers, and implements of husbandry used in connection with farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment to comply with the towing safety requirements of R.S. 32:384(A), (D), and (E)(3) and 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 (F) and 385(A)(4))

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The Committee Amendments Proposed by House Committee on Transportation, Highways and Public Works to the original bill:

1. Clarify that for safety chains and other devices mandated by present law to conform with manufacturer specifications or applicable federal motor vehicle safety standards, instead of the strength, attachment, and performance standards established by the Department of Transportation and Development.

Summary of Amendments Adopted by House

The House Floor Amendments to the engrossed bill:

1. Add a provision requiring motor vehicles, trailers, and semitrailers that were originally manufactured with brakes to be equipped with brakes upon all wheels.
2. Add a provision requiring trailers and semitrailers originally manufactured with safety chains or other safety devices to be equipped with safety chains or other safety devices.
3. Add a provision providing for the exclusion of trailers, semitrailers, or vehicles operated exclusively on private property or solely crossing a public roadway between contiguous parcels of land owned or leased by the same person from the provisions of proposed law.
4. Remove "air" from the fifty mile distance limitation for farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment.
5. Provide that farm equipment shall be exempt from the requirements of present law (R.S. 32:384(B), (C), and (E)(1) and (2)).
6. Clarify a proposed law provision by specifying that trailers, semitrailers, and implements of husbandry used in connection with farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment must comply with the towing safety requirements of present and proposed law (R.S. 32:384(A), (D), and (E)(3)).
7. Make technical changes.