



Pennsylvania Conference of Teamsters

Strength in Numbers 95,000

LEGISLATIVE ACTION ALERT

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DE Senate Bill 258 would require drivers for self-driving trucks in Delaware

PA Conference of Teamsters affiliate, Teamsters Local 326 in Delaware, along with the IBT, are instrumental in helping introduce a bill that would require drivers for self-driving trucks in Delaware.

Brother Paul Thornburg, Local 326 along with Brother John Mataya, State Legislative Director, Department of Political and Legislative Action IBT worked with Delaware Senator Mantzavinos, who introduced DE Senate Bill 258 a bill that would require potential autonomous freight and delivery trucks in Delaware to have a licensed driver onboard to prevent potential hazards.

DOVER – The Delaware state Senate took measures to make roads in the First State safer in the future. Sen. Spiros Mantzavinos, D-Elsmere, offered a bill that would require potential autonomous freight and delivery trucks in Delaware to have a licensed driver onboard to prevent potential hazards. Senate Bill 258 with Senate Amendments one and two, would prohibit any autonomous vehicle with a gross weight of 10,001 pounds or more from being operated on a Delaware highway for testing purposes, transporting goods, or transporting passengers without a human safety operator being physically present within the autonomous vehicle.

“In recent years, there's been a dramatic rise in autonomous vehicles. And you're starting to see a lot more use of Robo taxis. Out of concern for safety many jurisdictions that originally permitted autonomous passenger vehicles are now rethinking their policies,” Sen. Mantzavinos said on Thursday from the Senate floor. As an example, Sen. Mantzavinos mentioned the city of Phoenix, Arizona's recent reversal of its self-driving car laws. According to the Senator from Elsmere, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration recently announced an investigation into an autonomous vehicle company after receiving reports of its autonomous vehicles either crashing or violating traffic laws.

“As the autonomous vehicle industry is evolving, we're starting to see a focus now on investment in automated trucks and delivery vehicles, especially since the pandemic and you are seeing a number of companies that are producing and developing these freight trucks and testing them out in the southwest and larger states like California and Texas,” he said.

In 2021, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration mandated that all incidents involving autonomous vehicles to report crashes and malfunctions as part of a larger investigation and to increase transparency.

“What this bill does ... It doesn't ban the use of autonomous trucks, it doesn't prohibit it just says if you're going to have these on our roadways, you need a human safety officer in it,” Sen. Mantzavinos said.

The measure, which received support from both sides of the aisle, is patterned after laws in other states.

“Similar legislation like this has been introduced in Washington State, Texas, New York, New Mexico, Nebraska, Massachusetts, Maryland, Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Florida and California over the last two years,” Sen. Mantzavinos said.

Bills seek to ban driverless big rigs from Delaware and New York roadways

Delaware Bill To Require A CDL Holder In Self-Driving Trucks

Delaware State Sen. Spiros Mantzavinos introduced legislation (SB258) that would prohibit the operation of self-driving trucks without a human on board. Specifically, the bill would ban any autonomous vehicle with a gross weight of 10,001 pounds or more from operation on a Delaware highway “for testing purposes, transporting goods, or transporting passengers” unless there is a human operator physically inside the vehicle.

The bill would also require that the human operator hold a commercial driver’s license that is valid for the type of vehicle being autonomously driven. Another provision tucked into the bill would require the Delaware Department of Transportation to submit a report evaluating the performance of autonomous vehicle technology to the General Assembly and the Governor by January 1, 2029. SB258 is out of committee and awaiting further action from lawmakers.

New York State Seeks Driverless Big Rig Ban

Lawmakers in New York State are working on similar legislation banning driverless autonomous trucks. Companion bills A8621 and S7758 would amend the current state driver and traffic laws to require a licensed driver to be present inside of operating autonomous vehicles weighing ten thousand one pounds or more on public roadways. Both bills remain under consideration by committee.

Similar legislation to require human operators in self-driving semi-trucks has been introduced in Indiana and California.