



Senate Fiscal Agency
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BILL



ANALYSIS

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Senate Bill 314 (as passed by the Senate)
Sponsor: Senator Wayne Schmidt
Committee: Transportation

Date Completed: 3-15-16

RATIONALE

The Michigan Vehicle Code prescribes seasonal weight restrictions for vehicles operating on concrete pavements or pavements with a concrete base. The Code also contains a list of vehicles that qualify for an exemption from the seasonal weight restrictions. These include vehicles used to haul certain agricultural commodities. Apparently, maple syrup is an underproduced commodity in Michigan. To increase production of maple syrup, it has been suggested that maple sap and syrup be added to the items that are considered agricultural commodities for the exemption from the season weight restrictions.

CONTENT

The bill would amend the Michigan Vehicle Code to create an exception to the seasonal weight restrictions for vehicles transporting maple sap, maple syrup, and equipment used to produce maple syrup.

The Code prescribes maximum axle loads and gross vehicle weights for various configurations of vehicles. During the months of March, April, and May, the maximum axle load allowable on concrete pavements or pavements with a concrete base must be reduced by 25% from the specified maximum load, and by 35% on all other types of roads. In addition, the maximum wheel load may not exceed 525 pounds per inch of tire width on concrete and concrete base or 450 pounds per inch of tire width on all other roads while the seasonal road restrictions are in effect.

The Code contains exceptions to the seasonal restrictions for vehicles transporting agricultural commodities and, under certain circumstances, for public utility vehicles and vehicles delivering propane fuel to a home. As a rule, the county road commission must be notified in advance. The road commission must issue a permit and charge a fee that does not exceed its administrative costs.

The bill would amend the definition of "agricultural commodities" to include maple sap, maple syrup, and equipment used to produce maple syrup.

The bill would take effect 90 days after it was enacted.

MCL 257.722

ARGUMENTS

(Please note: The arguments contained in this analysis originate from sources outside the Senate Fiscal Agency. The Senate Fiscal Agency neither supports nor opposes legislation.)

Supporting Argument

According to a report by the National Agricultural Statistics Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, the United States produced 3,414,000 gallons of maple syrup during the 2015 season. The report states that the sap season lasted, on average, 26 days across the

United States. Temperature and other factors contribute to the length of a season for a geographic region. Vermont produced 41% of all maple syrup in the United States, while the second-largest producer, New York, produced 18%. Michigan was the sixth-largest producer of maple syrup, at 127,000 gallons, or 4% of the total amount of maple syrup produced in the United States during the 2015 season.

According to Committee testimony, Michigan is tapping only 1% of capable trees. If the maple syrup industry were to tap more trees, Michigan could become one of the largest maple syrup producers in North America, which could attract additional tourists and create other positive economic outcomes. The bill would take an important step toward increasing maple syrup production, as the sap season is short and the sap product needs to be transported as quickly as possible for processing.

Legislative Analyst: Drew Krogulecki

FISCAL IMPACT

The bill would have no fiscal impact on State or local government.

Fiscal Analyst: Glenn Steffens