

- SUBJECT:** Providing for permits for overweight timber trucks and equipment
- COMMITTEE:** Transportation — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 9 ayes — Pickett, Martinez, Burkett, Fletcher, Israel, Minjarez, Murr, Paddie, Simmons
- 0 nays
- 4 absent — Y. Davis, Harless, McClendon, Phillips
- SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 29 — 31-0
- WITNESSES:** For — Tim Rodrigues, Texas Logging Council; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Ronald Hufford, Texas Forestry Association; Linda Price, Texas Logging Council; Les Findeisen, Texas Trucking Association)
- Against — None
- On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Jimmy Archer, Texas Department of Motor Vehicles; Bill Hale, Texas Department of Transportation)
- BACKGROUND:** In 2013, the 83rd Legislature enacted HB 2741 by Phillips. Among its provisions, the bill added Transportation Code, ch. 623, subch. Q, which governs vehicles transporting timber. It provides for the issuance of permits authorizing a person to operate an overweight vehicle to transport unrefined timber and associated materials in certain counties on roads owned by the state.
- DIGEST:** SB 1171 would allow holders of a permit for an overweight timber truck issued under Transportation Code, ch. 623, subch. Q to drive overloaded vehicles on county roads. The bill would specify that these permit holders also were exempt from the weight limits established by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) on state highways, farm roads, and ranch roads. The bill would decrease the price of this permit from \$1,500 to \$900.

This bill also would exempt certain equipment used in the harvesting and production of timber from the width restriction on vehicles in Transportation Code, sec. 621.201, subject to specific conditions.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2015, and would apply only to an offense committed on or after that date.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

SB 1171 would correct an oversight in the drafting of previous law that has made industry less efficient. HB 2741 unintentionally did not include provisions that would apply the permit it created to county roads. Because most timber trucks must travel on county roads in rural areas, the current permit has little effect. It was estimated that the industry would purchase around 1,000 permits, but only about 40 were issued in the last year. This represents significant lost revenue that otherwise would go to the state highway fund and the counties where the permit would be valid.

This bill would not result in additional damage to road surfaces. In fact, it could result in a reduction of wear on roads because trucks would be making fewer trips. Any damage that did occur could be made up for by the additional revenue generated by the permit, 50 percent of which would be directed to the counties in which the permit is valid.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

SB 1171 would increase the number of overweight trucks on county roads, which could cause damage to road surfaces and pavement. Overweight trucks cause significantly more damage than normal vehicle traffic.