

December 5, 2017

The Honorable John McCain  
U.S. Senate  
218 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator McCain:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchisee Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable Jeff Flake  
U.S. Senate  
413 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Flake:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchise Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable Tom C. O'Halleran  
U.S. House of Representatives  
126 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative O'Halleran:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a



significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchise Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable Martha McSally  
U.S. House of Representatives  
510 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative McSally:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchisee Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1511 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Grijalva:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchise Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable Dr. Paul Anthony Gosar  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2057 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gosar:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.



Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchise Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable Andy Biggs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1626 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Biggs:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchisee Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable David Schweikert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2059 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Schweikert:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchise Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America





December 5, 2017

The Honorable Ruben Gallego  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1218 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Gallego:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchise Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable Trent Franks  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2435 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Franks:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a

significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchise Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America



December 5, 2017

The Honorable Kyrsten Sinema  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1725 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Sinema:

The below signed organizations – representing mostly small businesses, as well as American cities and local governments and blind entrepreneurs – urge you to protect the long-standing ban on privatizing and commercializing Interstate rest areas.

Recently, Governor Doug Ducey requested from the U.S. Department of Transportation a waiver for Arizona from the 60-year-old prohibition on the sale of food, fuel and other commercial services at Interstate rest areas. Governor Ducey further requested that the Trump Administration work with Congress to overturn the ban altogether. While we understand the budget challenges Arizona faces, and the need for more infrastructure revenue, Governor Ducey's proposal is ill conceived and ultimately counter-productive. Such a request flies in the face of Congressional intent to protect the communities that line interstates in Arizona and across the country.

When Congress created the Interstate Highway System in 1956, Congressional and community leaders feared that local businesses, jobs, and tax bases would shrink as motorists and truck drivers bypassed their cities and towns. For this reason, Congress prohibited new Interstate System rest areas from offering commercial services, such as food and convenience items. Since then, businesses have clustered near the Interstates at the interchanges to provide these services to Interstate travelers. Given how many businesses are located off of Interstate exits, it is one of the most competitive business environments in the country.

Today, our roads and bridges are in dire need of improvement, and the diverse group of organizations that have signed this letter all strongly support increased investment in our nation's infrastructure. Policies that incentivize such investment, however, should be designed to *create* jobs. Commercializing rest areas would *eliminate* jobs, while at the same time undercutting a number of important policy priorities that affect various sectors of the economy.

More specifically:

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Will Hurt Private Businesses**

While at first glance rest area commercialization seems like an easy and convenient way to generate revenue, that fact is it will jeopardize private businesses that for the last 60 years have operated under the current law and established locations at the highway exit. Due to their advantageous locations, state-owned commercial rest areas would establish virtual monopolies on the sale of services to highway travelers. Commercial activity will be diverted from off-highway communities to on-Interstate locations, redirecting tax revenue from localities to state capitals.

Commercializing rest areas will not generate “new” revenue. It would simply *transfer* sales away from the current competitive environment off highway exists to the business contractor that pays the largest amount to rent the location on the shoulder of the highway. When the government competes with private business in this way, it results in a monopoly, undermining the free market and raising prices for consumers.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten Cities and Towns**

In many rural communities located near Interstates, gas stations, restaurants, convenience stores, truckstops, and hotels represent the largest local tax base, contributing more than \$22.5 billion in state and local taxes nationwide. These funds help support schools, police and fire departments and other vital public services.

Commercializing rest areas would destroy the property tax base of local governments and put many companies out of business that have built their business model on access to the Interstate. The damage to thousands of local businesses means the cities and towns that rely on those businesses for tax revenues will be challenged to make up a substantial budgetary shortfall.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Hurt Consumers**

Prices are significantly higher at existing state-owned commercial rest areas than off-highway competitors because the state, contractor, and leasing vendor all take a piece of product sales. Additionally, the lack of viable competition will eliminate any downward pressure on prices. This stands in stark contrast to exist-based businesses, which operate in one of the most competitive environments in the United States, often competing with multiple other entities in close proximity to one another.

- **Commercialized Rest Areas Threaten the Livelihood of Blind Merchants**

Businesses that are owned by blind entrepreneurs currently enjoy a priority for installing and operating vending machines at Interstate rest areas. Many blind businessmen throughout the country rely on this opportunity to earn a living, support their families, and realize the American dream. If commercial rest areas are allowed, these entrepreneurs could be out of work virtually overnight.

- **Commercial Rest Areas Constrict Truck Parking Capacity**

Commercial rest areas diminish truck parking capacity, threatening a Congressional objective to increase truck parking availability nationwide. Private truckstops and travel plazas located off of Interstates provide nearly 90 percent of all truck parking in the United States, mostly free of charge, and need a healthy business climate to operate and expand. When states are permitted to provide commercial services at their rest areas, private businesses will either go out of business or, at a minimum, will not invest in expanded facilities. This will result in a net loss in truck parking capacity.

In conclusion, commercializing Interstate rest areas would create far more problems than it will solve. States and local communities will suffer when exit-based businesses and the jobs they support have to cut workers and potentially close; hard-working business owners will lose out on a



significant portion of their customer bases; blind entrepreneurs will be out of work; and truck drivers will have a harder time finding a safe place to rest.

Therefore, we strongly urge you to oppose any effort to commercialize Interstate rest areas.

Sincerely,

National Association of Truck Stop Operators  
Asian American Hotel Owners Association  
International Franchise Association  
National Association of Convenience Stores  
National Automatic Merchandising Association  
National Council of Chain Restaurants  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Franchisee Association  
National League of Cities  
National Restaurant Association  
National Tank Truck Carriers  
Petroleum Marketers Association of America  
Society of Independent Gasoline Marketers of America

