

2026 Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 868

BY REPRESENTATIVE DEWITT

MTR VEHICLE/TRAILERS: Provides relative to the requirement that trailers have approved safety chains while being towed by certain vehicles

1 AN ACT

2 To amend and reenact R.S. 32:341(C), (D), and (G), 384(A) and (D), and 385(A)(1)(a) and
3 to enact R.S. 32:384(E)(3) and 385(A)(4), relative to the regulation of motor
4 vehicles; to establish comprehensive requirements for brake equipment; to mandate
5 safety chain specifications for trailers and semi-trailers; to eliminate specific
6 exemptions pertaining to farm equipment; and to provide for related matters.

7 Be it enacted by the Legislature of Louisiana:

8 Section 1. R.S. 32:341(C), (D), and (G), 384(A) and (D), and 385(A)(1)(a) are
9 hereby amended and reenacted and R.S. 32:384(E)(3) and 385(A)(4) are hereby enacted to
10 read as follows:

11 §341. Brake equipment required

12 * * *

13 C. Every trailer or semi-trailer ~~of~~ used in commerce or that was originally
14 manufactured with brakes and has a gross weight of 3,000 pounds or more, when
15 operated upon a highway of this state, shall be equipped with brakes adequate to
16 control the movement of and to stop and hold such vehicle and ~~so designed as to be~~
17 ~~applied~~ shall be designed so that the brakes may be applied by the driver of the
18 towing motor vehicle from its cab, and ~~said~~ the brakes shall be so designed and
19 connected that in case of an accidental breakaway of the towed vehicle the brakes
20 shall be automatically applied. A semi-trailer, pole trailer, full trailer, or four-wheel
21 pole trailer with gross weight of 3,000 pounds or less shall not be mandated to be
22 equipped with braking systems, provided that the sum of the gross axle weight of the

1 towed vehicle does not exceed forty percent of the sum of the gross axle weight of
2 the towing vehicle.

3 D. Every motor vehicle, trailer or semi-trailer manufactured or assembled
4 after December 31, 1962, and thereafter sold in this state and operated upon the
5 highways of this state shall be equipped with brakes upon all wheels of every such
6 vehicle, except that no motorcycle, motor-driven cycle, or semi-trailer of less than
7 ~~1,500~~ 3,000 pounds gross weight, need be equipped with brakes.

8 * * *

9 G. All sport, boat, or any other nonagricultural trailers and semi-trailers ~~of~~
10 ~~less than 3000 pounds gross weight~~ not used in commerce between six thousand and
11 seven thousand pounds need not be equipped with brakes.

12 * * *

13 §384. Trailers and towed vehicles

14 A. The drawbar or connection between two vehicles or implements of
15 husbandry, when one is towing the other, shall be of sufficient strength to pull all
16 weight towed thereby and shall not exceed fifteen feet from one vehicle to the other,
17 except that the drawbar or connection may exceed fifteen feet between any two
18 vehicles transporting poles, pipes, machinery, or other objects of a structural nature
19 which cannot be readily dismembered. The drawbar or connection shall be securely
20 affixed in strict compliance with the manufacturer's specifications. This includes the
21 installation of all required pins, clips, or locking mechanisms, thereby ensuring the
22 prevention of any unintentional uncoupling while in operation.

23 * * *

24 D. Every trailer and semitrailer ~~with a loaded gross weight capacity of up to~~
25 ~~six thousand pounds~~ shall be equipped with safety chains or other safety ~~device~~
26 devices approved in accordance with Subsection E of this Section. The safety chains
27 or other approved safety ~~device~~ devices shall be securely attached to the towing
28 vehicle when the trailer or semitrailer is in motion and shall be of sufficient strength
29 to hold the trailer behind the towing vehicle in case the connection between the two

1 vehicles detaches. The provisions contained in this Section shall not apply to fifth-
2 wheel devices mounted on truck tractors or comparable towing vehicles, including
3 convertor dollies, that interface and connect with the upper coupler assembly of a
4 semi-trailer.

5 E.

6 * * *

7 (3) Safety chains and other safety devices mandated by Subsection D of this
8 Section shall conform to manufacturer specifications or applicable federal motor
9 vehicle safety standards. These devices shall be deemed sufficient to ensure the
10 secure connection between the towing vehicle and the trailer or semitrailer in the
11 event of a failure of the primary coupling device.

12 §385. Farm vehicles and equipment; exemptions

13 A.(1)(a) Farm and agricultural vehicles and equipment, except draglines and
14 bulldozers, being operated or transported for bona fide agricultural purposes or the
15 transportation of farm vehicles and equipment to be used for normal farm purposes
16 by persons transporting such farm equipment or machinery, for distances not to
17 exceed fifty air miles from the point of origin, and fertilizer tending units shall be
18 exempt from the requirements of R.S. 32:380 through 382 ~~and, additionally, farm~~
19 ~~equipment shall be exempt from the requirements of R.S. 32:384.~~

20 * * *

21 (4) Notwithstanding any exemption provided in this Section, trailers, semi-
22 trailers, and any implements of husbandry, used in connection with farm and
23 agricultural vehicles and equipment shall comply with towing connection
24 requirements of R.S. 32:384. The drawbar or other primary connection between a
25 towing vehicle and a trailer or semi-trailer shall be securely affixed in accordance
26 with the manufacturer’s specifications, including the installation of all required pins,
27 clips, or locking mechanisms, to prevent unintentional uncoupling while in
28 operation.

29 * * *

DIGEST

The digest printed below was prepared by House Legislative Services. It constitutes no part of the legislative instrument. The keyword, one-liner, abstract, and digest do not constitute part of the law or proof or indicia of legislative intent. [R.S. 1:13(B) and 24:177(E)]

HB 868 Engrossed

2026 Regular Session

Dewitt

Abstract: Specifies the requirements for brake equipment and safety chains for trailers and semi-trailers, eliminates the safety chain exemption for farm equipment, updates the weight thresholds, and clarifies the applicability of these regulations.

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 semi-trailers 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 semi-trailers from 1,500 lbs. to a 3,000 lbs.

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 a gross weight 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. Further exempts fifth-wheel devices mounted on truck tractors or comparable towing vehicles from being equipped with a safety chain or approved safety device.

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.

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 removes the exemption applicable to farm equipment from the requirements of present law (R.S. 32:384) and clarifies that the mileage language refers to air miles.

Proposed law 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 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.