

## **Congress aims to slow flow of Mexican trucks**

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WASHINGTON - Congress tried this week to slow Mexican trucks from rolling throughout the United States unless they comply with U.S. safety and pollution laws.

The House voted Wednesday to block Mexican trucks from traveling beyond the current 20-mile border zone unless they meet safety standards. On Thursday, California's senators offered a bill to require those vehicles to comply with environmental laws.

Under the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, the United States agreed to give Mexican trucks full access to U.S. highways in 2000. But U.S. truckers, environmental groups and others have fought to prevent that from happening. Currently, Mexican trucks drop off their loads in the border zone and U.S. shippers pick up the loads.

The Supreme Court ruled in June in a lawsuit filed by environmentalists and truckers that the Bush administration had the right to allow Mexican trucks full access to U.S. highways without a more extensive environmental review. But Congress could still make changes to the rules.

The House voted 339-70 Wednesday to add an amendment to a transportation-spending bill to require foreign trucks to prove they contain the proper equipment.

But Rep. Jim Kolbe, R-Ariz., said the amendment was aimed at blocking free trade with Mexico.

"This issue is not about highway safety," Kolbe said. "Pure and simple, this amendment is about protectionism."