

# THE FUTURE MIGHT BE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK

*“New Self-Driving Car Legislation Does Not Include Commercial Trucks”*

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In recent months, both the United States House of Representatives and the Senate have been working on legislation that may pave the way for driverless cars to enter the roadway near you. In September 2017, the U.S. House passed the SELF-DRIVE Act which allows automakers to obtain exemptions to deploy thousands of self-driving vehicles without meeting existing auto safety standards. The Act also bars states from blocking autonomous vehicles.

Meanwhile, the Senate Commerce Committee in October 2017 unanimously approved a similar bill (the AV Start Act) that clarifies the roles of states and the federal government in the autonomous car future. It provides that the NHTSA would oversee the design and manufacture of self-driving cars, but that states would continue to license, regulate, and enforce traffic laws. The Senate bill offers the same exemptions to automakers found in the House version. The measure will now go to the Senate floor to face a vote, and if it is approved, will be sent to the President to sign in to law.

Absent from both bills, however, are commercial motor vehicles. Trucking unions have successfully fought to exempt self-driving commercial trucks from the new legislation. The unions raised legitimate concerns regarding both safety and job security. For example, they questioned whether self-driving trucks would be cybersecure, and if they are, how they would affect the livelihood of 3.4 million American truck drivers. As a result of these concerns, the House and Senate bills do not apply to vehicles bigger than 10,000 pounds, vehicles meant to transport more than 10 passengers, or vehicles carrying hazardous materials.

Moving forward, the rules for self-driving trucks remain unclear. But make no mistake, the future of the trucking industry will include self-driving vehicles. Uber, Tesla, and Amazon have all lobbied for national legislation governing the manufacture, sale, and use of autonomous trucks. Additionally, Daimler, Tesla,

Toyota, and Volkswagen have each reportedly been investigating and testing commercial truck convoy (“platooning”) technology that aims to coordinate automated long-haul trucking. As automated driver technology continues to advance, the trucking industry should expect future legislation will cover commercial vehicles. Keeping apprised of self-driving vehicle legislation will help trucking companies and truck drivers to prepare for and transition into the automated future, if and when it arrives.



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