

Veto No. 2019-2

HB 915

July 2, 2019

To the Honorable House of Representatives of the
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

Pursuant to Article IV, Section 15 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, I am returning herewith, without my approval, House Bill 915, Printer's Number 1487.

After careful consideration, I must veto this legislation due to very serious public safety concerns. A declaration of disaster emergency carries the gravest considerations insofar as the traveling public is concerned. Furthermore, prior declarations have proven effective in lessening the danger to the public at-large during precarious time periods. Providing for an exemption to the travel ban under the declaration puts the public in jeopardy, which, in turn, endangers our State Police and first responders and even our milk haulers. In my view, such an exemption runs counter to the safety of the driving public.

I think it is important to note several things about the travel ban under consideration in this legislation. Typically, the bans are short in duration; however, they may be extended due to vehicle accidents or stranded motorists due to hazardous conditions on the highways. For example, on November 15, 2018, a severe winter weather event occurred in this Commonwealth. Interstates 83, 81, 80, and 78 were closed for up to 15 hours while commercial vehicles were removed from the snow and ice that had built up around their stopped vehicles. Commercial vehicle bans were then initiated for the next five storms spanning from January to March 2019. With the bans in place, there were no significant closures on the interstate highways in this Commonwealth. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the commercial vehicle bans implemented during this time averaged only 18 hours in duration. This time seems like a small price to pay when considering the public safety benefits of the travel bans.

For the reasons set forth above, I must withhold my signature from House Bill 915, Printer's Number 1487.

TOM WOLF