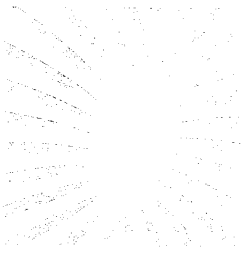


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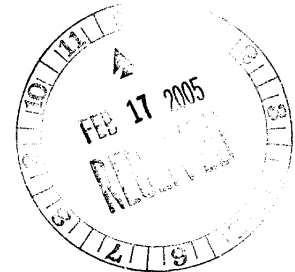


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January 24, 2005

Mr. Vernon A. Williams
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K. Street, NW
Washington, DC 20423-0001
Reference STB EXParte No. 656

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thomas Lighting is a leader in the residential lighting industry. We operate one domestic plant and three distributions centers. A key element to our competitiveness against direct importers and competing for retail sales amongst other home oriented goods is our freight costs. The rate classification changes for our products will have a long term negative effect on our business and this industry.

I understand the Surface Transportation Board is currently evaluating the appropriateness of extending the continued antitrust exemption for the National Classification Committee ("NCC"). I urge you to deny the continuance of this unfair collective agreement.

There is not room in today's unregulated economy to continue the collective agreement activity of the National Classification Committee. Freight costs should be determined in the open market with agreements and contracts established between individual shippers and truckers. The current system rewards one special interest group (i.e., trucking companies) at the expense of consumers and competitive domestic fair trade.

As the industries the trucking industries serve compete in a deregulated fair trade environment, so should the trucking industry. Competition has proven that entrepreneurs and innovators will "build a better mousetrap" to drive cost reductions. Further regulatory protection will only serve to drive up costs and inefficiencies.

Please consider this input and choose to deny to continuance.

Very truly yours,



Terry M. Fraser
Vice President/General Manager

TMF/do
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