

HOUSE REPUBLICAN STAFF ANALYSIS

Bill:	House File 2700/Senate File 2426	House Committee:	PASSED 14-6 (2/18/26)
Committee:	Transportation	House Floor:	
Floor Manager:	Rep. Ann Meyer	Senate Floor:	PASSED 47-0 (2/25/26)
Date:	March 30, 2026	Governor:	
Staff:	Brad Trow (1-3471)		

English Language Proficiency Requirements for Commercial Driver’s License Holders

- House File 2700/Senate File 2426 would implement a requirement that commercial drivers demonstrate sufficient English language proficiency to receive or renew a commercial driver’s license or receive a commercial learner’s permit. The Department of Transportation must administer a computer-based English proficiency exam, and commercial motor carriers are prohibited from employing drivers who do not meet the standard.
- Civil penalties are imposed on commercial carriers and drivers for violations, and criminal penalties apply to non-proficient drivers operating commercial vehicles. The bill also outlines procedures for handling vehicles and cargo when violations occur.
- If this requirement were to be in violation of federal law or cause the loss of federal funds, then the Department is authorized to stop enforcement of the provision in question.

Section by Section Analysis

Section 1 – [Iowa Code section 321.177 (12)] -

Section 1 adds to the list of conditions under which the Department of Transportation is prohibited from issuing a driver’s license. Section 1 adds any person who is seeking a commercial driver’s license and fails to demonstrate English proficiency.

Section 2 – NEW SECTION [Iowa Code section 321.187B] English language proficiency – commercial drivers:

The section lays out the requirement for English proficiency by those seeking a commercial driver’s license or a commercial learner’s permit.

The Department of Transportation is required to give every applicant for their initial commercial driver’s license an exam to see if they demonstrate the ability to read and speak English sufficiently to converse with the general public, understand highway traffic signs and signals in English, respond to official inquiries, and to make entries into federally required reports and records. The exam shall be given via computer.

The DOT is prohibited from issuing a new commercial driver’s license or renewing an existing CDL if the driver is unable to provide evidence that they are English proficient based on passing the test in subsection 1a. A person who does not successfully pass the test may retake it. The Department is given administrative rulemaking authority to implement the bill.

The DOT is given authority to stop enforcing a portion of this Code section if continued enforcement would violate federal law or results in the loss of federal funds.

Section 3 – NEW SECTION – [Iowa Code section 321.449C]: English language proficiency – commercial drivers and commercial motor carriers.

The section provides the penalties for drivers and carriers who are found to not be English proficient when stopped by law enforcement in Iowa.

Subsection 1 states that a person who cannot demonstrate proficiency in English sufficient to meet the federal requirements for operating the commercial motor vehicle is prohibited from operating such a vehicle in Iowa. The driver is subject to a \$1000 civil penalty and may be charged with a serious misdemeanor and sentenced to up to one year in jail.

Subsection 2 would prohibit a commercial motor carrier from employing a commercial driver or contracting with an independent contractor who is not proficient in English. If a carrier violates this prohibition, they are subject to the following fines:

First offense –	\$3000
Second offense -	\$5,000
Third and subsequent violation -	\$10,000

Under Subsection 3. when a commercial driver who is not English proficient is found to be operating a motor vehicle, the commercial carrier employing the driver will be notified of the vehicle’s location and may have a different commercial driver take possession of the vehicle as long as the second driver is English proficient. Before taking possession of the vehicle, the carrier must pay the fine.

If the carrier fails to pay the fine within 12 hours of notification, then the owner of the cargo being transported shall be notified and may make arrangements to transfer the cargo to a different vehicle. If the vehicle is towed, the cost of the tow or impoundment shall not be paid by the state, local government, or the owner of the cargo.

Subsection 4 gives the DOT authority to stop enforcing a portion of this Code section if continued enforcement would violate federal law or results in the loss of federal funds.

Section 4 – APPLICABILITY: This makes Section 1 of the bill effective on March 1, 2027 or when the DOT certifies that their new records system has been implemented, whichever is earlier.

AMENDMENTS TO HF 2700

H-8054, by A Meyer: The amendment conforms HF 2700 to the Senate version of the bill, SF 2426. The amendment strikes the language that limits requiring the English proficiency exam for those seeking their initial CDL. The amendment inserts a provision to allow those who have already passed the exam to submit proof of passage to allow them to not have to retake the test.

H-8054 revises the criminal penalty for driving a commercial vehicle in Iowa while not being English proficient to allow law enforcement to issue an out-of-service order if the driver has an unexpired CDL issued by the DOT after the driver had passed the English proficiency test.

The amendment also inserts a Federal law citation in the section that penalizes commercial carriers who hire a driver that is not English proficient.

AMENDMENTS TO SF 2426

H-8060, by Wilson: The amendment strikes the language prohibiting a person with a commercial driver's license from operating a commercial vehicle in Iowa if they are not English proficient. The amendment also strikes the penalties for violating this law and renumbers the bill.

H-8061, by Cooling: The amendment changes the penalties for commercial carriers violating this law. If a carrier is found to have violated this for a fourth or subsequent time, the company would be prohibited from operating in Iowa until ownership and management staff have taken DOT-developed training on the importance of complying with this law.

H-8065, by A Meyer: The amendment inserts corrective language that clarifies which provisions involve the Department of Public Safety.

H-8081, by Cooling: The amendment applies the English proficiency requirement to the owner or operator of a commercial motor carrier.

H-8087, by Cooling: The amendment would require Representatives and Senators to pass the English proficiency test administered to those applying for a commercial driver's license. Members of the Executive Council are also required to pass the test. The Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk of the House would be required to print the scores of legislators in the journals of each chamber and on the Legislature's internet page.

H-8265, by Meyer: The amendment makes several substantive changes. First, the amendment strikes the bill's language penalizing a carrier for hiring a driver who is not sufficiently proficient English speaker, and replaces it with the following:

A commercial motor carrier is prohibited from employing a driver who is not proficient in English under federal law. A carrier who violates this prohibition is guilty of a serious misdemeanor. The court is required to impose a \$10,000 civil penalty and may order imprisonment of up to one year for each violation. Additionally, a peace officer is required to issue an out of service order to a carrier if they find that a carrier is allowing or has allowed a person who is not English proficient to operate a commercial motor vehicle, or the carrier has been issued an out of service order by another state for allowing a person who is not English proficient to operate a commercial motor vehicle.

The amendment also strikes the provision dealing with what happens when a driver is stopped for not being English proficient and receives an out of service order. The new language would have the issuing officer notify the commercial motor carrier employing the driver and the owner of the cargo shipment to provide them with the location of the vehicle. The carrier or the cargo owner would have the ability to send a new driver, who is English proficient, or transfer the cargo to another vehicle.

The amendment clarifies that the Department of Public Safety is responsible for enforcement of the law.

H-82??, by Meyer: The amendment to H-8265 would change the criminal charge against the motor carrier from a serious misdemeanor to a simple misdemeanor. A carrier violating this law would still be subject to the \$10,000 civil penalty per offense.