

March 24, 2015

Dear Members of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation:

We are writing to you on behalf of a broad range of manufacturing, agricultural, and energy industries, urging you to support S. 808, “The Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization Act of 2015”.

Our groups are committed to modernizing the Surface Transportation Board (STB) so that it works better for both the railroads and the large and small American businesses that rely on them. The reforms in this bill would help accomplish that goal and help make the STB operate in a more timely, efficient, and equitable manner.

The bill introduced by Chairman John Thune and Ranking Member Bill Nelson would reauthorize the STB for the first time since it was created and would make the Board a more effective agency for handling freight rail issues. The legislation would streamline rate case procedures, create a meaningful alternative dispute resolution process, and require an analysis of the rules under which the Board operates. Other common-sense improvements include allowing the Board members to discuss agency matters with each other, permitting the Board to launch its own investigations, and creating much needed timelines for completing cases.

Much has changed since Congress created the STB to address freight rail issues. Now, it must ensure that the Board is properly equipped to deal with the dramatic transformation of the railroad industry and serve as a viable, timely forum for both shippers and railroads.

Quite simply, the legislation proposed by the Chairman and Ranking Member will make important and necessary improvements that are consistent with the direction Congress set for the STB when it was first created. We strongly urge you to support “The Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization Act of 2015” and its swift passage by the Committee.

Agricultural Retailers Association

Alliance for Rail Competition

Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers

American Chemistry Council

American Farm Bureau Federation

American Forest & Paper Association

American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers

American Public Power Association

Chemistry Council of New Jersey

Consumers United for Rail Equity

Edison Electric Institute

The Fertilizer Institute

Foundry Association of Michigan

Georgia Chemistry Council

Glass Packaging Institute

Growth Energy

Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries, Inc.

Louisiana Chemical Association

Louisiana Chemical Industry Alliance

Louisiana Industrial Development Executives Association

Manufacture Alabama

Manufacturers Association of Florida

Michigan Agri-Business Association

Michigan Bean Shippers Association

Michigan Farm Bureau

Michigan Chemistry Council

Midwest Food Processors Association

Missouri Forest Products Association

National Association of Chemical Distributors

National Association of Wheat Growers

National Farmers Union

National Industrial Transportation League

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Nebraska Soybean Association

Nebraska Wheat Growers Association

Plastic Pipe and Fittings Association

Portland Cement Association

PVC Pipe Association

Society of Chemical Manufacturers and Affiliates

South Dakota Farmers Union

Steel Manufacturers Association

Texas Chemical Council

Vinyl Building Council

The Vinyl Institute

Vinyl Siding Institute, Inc.

Wisconsin Corn Growers Association

Wisconsin Electric Cooperative Association