

December 16, 2009

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller
Chairman, Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
531 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Member, Committee on
Commerce, Science and Transportation
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Frank Lautenberg
Chairman, Subcommittee on Surface
Transportation and Merchant Marine
Infrastructure, Safety, and Security
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Thune
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Surface Transportation and Merchant
Marine Infrastructure, Safety, and Security
493 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Byron Dorgan
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison, Chairman Lautenberg, Ranking Member Thune and Senator Dorgan:

As industries that are dependent on a well-functioning rail system that is both efficient and competitive, we fully support the introduction of the Surface Transportation Board (STB) Reauthorization Act of 2009, and we commend your leadership in solving real-world rail challenges.

We believe this legislation will bring needed reform to the STB that will improve competitive conditions and transparency in the rail industry and bring about meaningful relief for rail shippers. The bill will provide improved mechanisms for challenging rail rates, services and practices that are much more accessible to agricultural companies and producers.

Specifically, we believe the bill will better balance shipper needs for reasonable rates and service with railroad needs for adequate revenues and provide for a fair, expeditious, accessible and cost-effective regulatory process. The railroads need adequate revenues to reinvest in capacity, but there is also a need to facilitate a more normal business-to-business relationship between shippers and carriers. This bill will assist in reaching that goal.

Nearly 30 years have passed since passage of the Staggers Act, and our nation needs new rail transportation policy to reflect the reality of the marketplace in the 21st century for both railroads and the shipping communities. We applaud your work and that of your staff members in developing a fair and reasonable compromise on a bipartisan basis that balances the needs of the agriculture shipping community with the needs of the railroads.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues in moving this important piece of legislation to the finish line.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Chicken Council
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Grain and Feed Association
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Sorghum Producers
National Turkey Federation
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice Federation