



ARC

Alliance for Rail Competition

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Federal News Update March 3, 2008

NASDA Urges Support of H.R. 2125 / S. 953

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) sent a letter last week to Congressional leaders expressing its strong support for the Railroad Competition and Service Improvement Act of 2007 (H.R. 2125 / S. 953). A sample letter is attached with this update. As an organization that serves agriculture producers and industries nationwide, NASDA's endorsement of the legislation underscores to Congress the importance of rail competition to the Nation's critical industries. Special thanks goes to Roy De Yong, Director of Montana Department of Agriculture, for working to garner the Association's official endorsement of the legislation.

Shippers to Lobby Congress Next Week during Annual Rail Shipper Day

On Wednesday, March 12th, ARC will be joined by other shipper groups and interests from across the country in an effort to raise awareness of rail competition on Capitol Hill. This is the fourth annual event of this nature, and the past three have proven very successful. 2008 will be a key year for moving the shipper legislation forward, thus it is critically important for Congress to see the overarching effect that H.R. 2125/S. 953 will have on its constituents nationwide.

We appreciate the support of all ARC members who have already made plans to participate. The activities will begin with a briefing by our Washington Representative, Meyers & Associates, at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, March 11th. Congressional meetings will take place on Wednesday, March 12th, along with other activities with our coalition partners. If you need additional information regarding the Rail Shipper Day, please contact Holly Meagher at hollymeagher@meyersandassociates.com or 202-484-7133.

ARC Organizational Plan Finalized

Following a meeting earlier this year, the Executive Committee endorsed the following Mission, Strategy, and Plan for 2008:

Mission: Support the Nation's railroads and their workforce to achieve a reliable and safe railroad network that serves all consumers ensuring American competitiveness.

Strategy: Fair and balanced implementation of the Staggers Rail Act of 1980

Plan for 2008: ARC shall:

1. In addition to the Annual Shipper Day, schedule "mini" rail days, which target state/local and specific commodities;
2. Encourage media events that specifically address shipper causes (i.e. The Western Governors meeting);
3. Encourage and support its members' participation in studies, Congressional testimonies, and STB hearings;
4. Increase membership.

February 26, 2008

The Honorable Frank R. Lautenberg, Chairman
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee
On Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security
324 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3003

Dear Chairman Lautenberg:

As an organization representing agricultural producers and industries nationwide, we are writing to express our strong support for the Rail Competition and Service Improvement Act of 2007. S. 953 was introduced in the 110th Congress by Senators Dorgan and Rockefeller with 12 co-sponsors. A companion bill, H.R. 2125, was introduced in the House with 53 co-sponsors. This indicates the non-partisan nature of, as well as national interest in, this proposed legislation.

Rail transportation remains a critical component to the agriculture industry as it moves commodities to domestic and international markets from the producers in rural America. We, the elected and appointed members of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture, continue to support a safe, efficient, and economical rail infrastructure system. However, lack of competition among the railroads has resulted in unreasonably high rates and unreliable service for agriculture producers. Today, with the massive concentration in the rail industries in the 1980's and 1990's, entire states, whole regions and even complete industries have become captive to a single railroad.

S. 953 is critically important to ensure that rail customers have access to competitive rail service and that those rail customers in areas without competition retain access to reliable rail service and are protected from unreasonable railroad rates and practices. The legislation also includes provisions such as final offer arbitration, which is especially important to agriculture because grain producers and marketers have no ability to pass costs on to customers in the form of higher prices when transportation costs are raised arbitrarily.

This legislation is supported by the Alliance for Rail Competition which includes the Agricultural Ocean Transportation Industry, the American Chemistry Council, American Public Power Association, Consumers United for Rail Equity, the Edison Electric Institute, National Association of Wheat Growers, National Barley Growers Association, National Petroleum Refiners Association, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Paper and Forest Industry Transportation Committee and the United Transportation Union.

The Senate Commerce Committee held productive hearings on this legislation last fall. The bill has significant bipartisan co-sponsorship from members representing agriculture constituencies. We want to lend our strong support to your continued efforts to bring fairness to the marketplace and to ensure agriculture access to safe, reliable and competitive railroad service in this ever increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Sincerely,



Roger Johnson
NASDA President
Commissioner, North Dakota Department of Agriculture



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