



ARC

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Rail Study Provision Included in the Farm Bill

Earlier today, the Senate approved the farm bill conference report by an overwhelming margin (81-15). Yesterday, the House of Representatives did the same by an equally impressive margin (318-106).

The bill contains a very important provision mandating USDA to conduct a study in partnership with DOT of how transportation, and specifically rail, affects the movement of agriculture products. The provision includes multiple important areas that must be covered by the study that will have to be submitted to Congress within one year of the enactment of the bill.

The provision was originally included in the House version of the farm bill and sponsored by Congressman Tim Walz (D-MN), who has been a champion for shipper issues. ARC members worked tirelessly beginning last year to make sure this provision was included in the bill, despite the strong opposition from the railroads. After their defeat in the House, the railroads put significant pressure on the Senate and had a similar provision removed from the Senate version at the last minute. The railroads continued to oppose the provision until the final days of conference report negotiations, aided in their effort by the White House. ARC members effectively lobbied for the provision during the duration of the farm bill conference and led a diverse coalition of agriculture groups whose support was key to this legislative victory. Despite the railroads' strong opposition and lobbying, the provision was included in the final version of the bill. Special thanks also goes to Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) who spearheaded the effort in the Senate.

In addition to lobbying for this specific provision, ARC joined multiple agriculture groups in a strong call to Congress to pass the conference report in defiance of the President Bush's veto threat. ARC showed strong support for its agriculture members by signing on to a letter calling for passage of the legislation with over 500 other organizations.

The bill should be sent to the White House early next week. He has stated earlier that he will veto the bill. If he does, the House and Senate plan to vote on the veto override prior to the Memorial Day recess which will begin May 26th.