

September 16, 2014

The Honorable Jay Rockefeller  
Chairman  
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee  
U.S. Senate  
254 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Thune  
Ranking Member  
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee  
U.S. Senate  
254 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member:

The undersigned agricultural producer and agribusiness organizations commend you for introducing common-sense and much-needed legislation, S. 2777, that would reauthorize the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB).

Rail service disruptions and other challenges confronted by agricultural producers, shippers and receivers during the past year have brought into sharp focus the constructive role the STB can play if given the proper authorities and resources. Your legislation would make important contributions in that regard by strengthening the independence of the STB; improving how it functions (including allowing much-needed ongoing dialogue amongst board members); requiring more transparency concerning the status of its proceedings and the nature and disposition of complaints brought before the agency; and providing for a voluntary arbitration process for disputes involving unreasonable rail rates, unreasonable rail practices and rail carriers' common-carrier service obligations – with binding outcomes if utilized – that also recognizes and provides for the existence of private-sector arbitration systems for resolving such disputes. We particularly commend you for including in S. 2777 language that would expressly authorize the STB to initiate an investigation of rail practices – except for rate complaints – on its own initiative, without having to wait for the filing of a formal complaint by a freight rail user or group of users.

As such, your legislation represents an important and necessary step in making it possible for agricultural and other users of freight rail service to secure the meaningful, intended safeguards and protections embodied in the Staggers Rail Act of 1980.

We again commend you for your leadership, and look forward to continuing to work with you and the Committee in securing enactment of S. 2777.

Sincerely,

Agribusiness Council of Indiana  
Agribusiness Association of Iowa  
Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Bakers Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Soybean Association  
Corn Refiners Association  
Grain and Feed Association of Illinois  
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils  
Kansas Grain and Feed Association  
Michigan Agri-Business Association  
Michigan Bean Shippers  
Minnesota Grain and Feed Association  
Missouri Agribusiness Association  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Barley Growers Association  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Oilseed Processors Association  
National Sunflower Association  
Nebraska Grain and Feed Association  
North American Millers' Association  
North Dakota Grain Dealers Association  
Northeast Agribusiness and Feed Alliance  
Ohio AgriBusiness Association  
Oklahoma Grain and Feed Association  
Pacific Northwest Grain and Feed Association  
Rocky Mountain Agribusiness Association  
South Dakota Grain and Feed Association  
Texas Grain and Feed Association  
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council  
USA Rice Federation  
U.S. Canola Association  
U.S. Dry Bean Council  
Wisconsin Agri-Business Association

cc: All Members of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee