

April 19, 2007

The Honorable Tom Latham
2447 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Latham,

This letter is to ask your help to remove current federal barriers that give the railroad industry protections which allow them to avoid antitrust laws and make it difficult -- if not impossible -- for customers who use rail services to get relief from excessively high rates and bad service. There are only four major rail carriers left in the United States now and their practices are driving up energy and consumer good prices.

I urge you to support the following legislation:

* H.R. 1650, the Railroad Antitrust Enforcement Act, introduced by Representatives Baldwin (D-WI) and Alexander (R-LA).

* Become an original cosponsor of the Rail Competition and Service Improvement Act of 2007, to be introduced by Representatives Oberstar (D-MN) and Baker (R-LA).

H.R. 1650 addresses these big rail monopolies whose anticompetitive practices can be stopped only by removing their exclusive antitrust exemptions. For most industries in the United States, the current rail practices would be illegal. If these antitrust exemptions are repealed, costs for electricity and many other goods would not be as high as they are today. This is why 17 state Attorneys General recently sent a joint letter to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees asking for such legislation.

Representatives Oberstar and Baker's legislation, The Rail Competition and Service Improvement Act, will deal with the second barrier. Currently a customer who has terrible service or unjustifiable rates for service has no effective protection at the federal government. There is an agency, the Surface Transportation Board, that is supposed to be responsible for ensuring competition and fair rail rates, but it is so weak and ineffective on behalf of rail customers and consumers, that it either will not or cannot, safeguard anyone from railroad abuse. Among other things, this legislation will address the fact that currently only a customer who has very deep pockets can even challenge a railroad practice abuse. And even if a customer can come up with the money to bring a complaint, the rules are totally stacked to the benefit of the railroads. Effectively there is no place to go for relief within the federal government. This legislation will correct this problem.

I sincerely urge you to support both pieces of legislation and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

April 19, 2007

The Honorable Tom Harkin
731 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator Harkin,

Thank you for your help to remove current federal barriers that give the railroad industry protections which allow them to avoid antitrust laws and make it difficult -- if not impossible -- for customers who use rail services to get relief from excessively high rates and bad service. There are only four major rail carriers left in the United States now and their practices are driving up energy and consumer good prices.

Sincerely,

April 19, 2007

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510-1501

Dear Senator Grassley,

This letter is to ask your help to remove current federal barriers that give the railroad industry protections which allow them to avoid antitrust laws and make it difficult -- if not impossible -- for customers who use rail services to get relief from excessively high rates and bad service. There are only four major rail carriers left in the United States now and their practices are driving up energy and consumer good prices.

I urge you to support the following two pieces of legislation:

* S. 772, the Railroad Antitrust Enforcement Act, introduced by Senators Kohl (D-WI), Coleman (R-MN), Feingold (D-WI), Vitter (R-LA) and Rockefeller (D-WV).

* S. 953, the Rail Competition and Service Improvement Act of 2007, introduced by Senators Rockefeller (D-WV), Craig (R-ID), Dorgan (D-ND), and Vitter (R-LA).

S. 772 addresses these big rail monopolies whose anticompetitive practices can be stopped only by removing their exclusive antitrust exemptions. For most industries in the United States, the current rail practices would be illegal. If these antitrust exemptions are repealed, costs for electricity and many other goods would not be as high as they are today. This is why 17 state Attorneys General recently sent a joint letter to the House and Senate Judiciary Committees asking for such legislation.

S. 953, The Rail Competition and Service Improvement Act, will deal with the second barrier. Currently a customer who has terrible service or unjustifiable rates for service has no effective protection at the federal government. There is an agency, the Surface Transportation Board, that is supposed to be responsible for ensuring competition and fair rail rates, but it is so weak and ineffective on behalf of rail customers and consumers, that it either will not or cannot, safeguard anyone from railroad abuse. Among other things, this legislation will address the fact that currently only a customer who has very deep pockets can even challenge a railroad practice abuse. And even if a customer can come up with the money to bring a complaint, the rules are totally stacked to the benefit of the railroads. Effectively there is no place to go for relief within the federal government. This legislation will correct this problem.

I sincerely urge you to support both pieces of legislation and I look forward to hearing from you.

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