



June 21, 2023

**VIA EMAIL**

To: All Members of Congress

**Re: Railway Safety Act of 2023**

Dear Member of Congress:

We are writing on behalf of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) and the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM), representing nearly 1.4 million hardworking men and women across the United States. We urge you to support the bipartisan Railway Safety Act (S. 576), as amended and approved recently by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of our nation's railways and the dedicated workers who keep them running is paramount. As two of the largest labor unions in the country, we are deeply committed to advocating for the rights and safety of the members of the IBEW and IAM. The Railway Safety Act presents a crucial opportunity to enhance the protection and welfare of rail workers and the general public.

There is an urgent need to improve freight rail safety following the tragic derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. Today, there are more than 1,000 train derailments each year in the U.S., and most can devastate a community like East Palestine. As National Transportation Safety Board Chair Jennifer Homendy mentioned following the East Palestine incident, "This was 100% preventable. We call things accidents. There is no accident. Every single event that we investigate is preventable." It falls on our elected leaders to reform the current railroad safety practices so that the rate of derailments can begin to trend down.

The Railway Safety Act enhances rail safety in several ways. For our members, the bill prohibits railroads from placing impossible time constraints on railcar and locomotive inspectors, as

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detailed in the Wall Street Journal's front-page expose on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023.<sup>1</sup> The bill would also require more frequent locomotive and railcar safety inspections.

The Class I railroads will claim they cannot abide by these modest, commonsense safety reforms. However, all safety inspection reforms are simply process clarifications and improvements of existing regulations with which the railroads should already comply. Therefore, I urge you to refrain from subscribing to the railroads' argument.

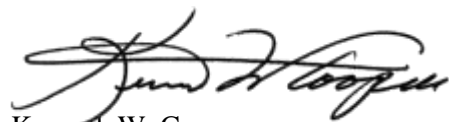
By implementing the more stringent inspection mandates outlined in this legislation, you are effectively guaranteeing that highly skilled trade workers, who have undergone years of training to achieve journey-level status, are responsible for carrying out the tasks they have been specifically trained for. In addition, this ensures that unqualified workers from unrelated trades or contractors who may have only completed a brief online training course are not assigned to perform the work.

With its comprehensive approach, the Railway Safety Act focuses on vital safety measures, as it creates a significant step toward safeguarding railway employees and the public. By supporting this legislation, you will help foster a safer working environment for our members while ensuring the efficient and reliable transportation of goods and passengers across the country.

We kindly request that you join your colleagues in Congress in supporting the bipartisan Railway Safety Act (S. 576). Your endorsement of this critical legislation will demonstrate your commitment to the well-being of our hardworking union members, the American public, and the continued growth and prosperity of our nation's rail industry.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We appreciate your ongoing dedication to the well-being and safety of American workers.

Signed for IBEW



Kenneth W. Cooper  
International President, IBEW

Signed for IAM



Robert Martinez Jr.  
International President, IAM

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<sup>1</sup>Esther Fung, Kris Maher, Paul Berger. "Hurry Up and Get It Done": Norfolk Southern Set Railcar Safety Checks at One Minute" <https://www.wsj.com/articles/railroads-are-a-lot-more-efficient-are-they-also-less-safe-7c5d2a60>