

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2014

The Honorable Patty Murray, Chairman
The Honorable Susan Collins, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Collins:

As you begin consideration of the Fiscal Year 2015 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to support new funding for a Safe Transportation of Energy Products Fund, while also making needed investments to increase Federal Railroad Administration and Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration inspection personnel.

As you know, four years ago, our nation's railroads hauled very little crude oil by rail. Now, railroads transport approximately one-tenth of U.S. crude oil output – approximately 800,000 barrels per day. The rail system in the United States has seen a 6,000% increase in crude on rail since 2007 driven in large part by remarkable increases in energy development from the Bakken Formation in North Dakota and Montana. In light of several tragic accidents involving crude-by-rail trains – including the most recent derailment and explosion of tanker cars carrying crude oil near Casselton, North Dakota – communities stretching across our country from the Midwest to coastal ports and refineries are rightly concerned about the safe movement of these combustible products.

A Safe Transportation and Energy Products Fund would provide U.S. Department of Transportation new flexibility to address emerging issues related to the transportation of Bakken crude and other energy products – including, but not limited to: more expeditious rulemakings, technical studies, increased rail and energy product inspections, safety mitigation and response planning, first responder training, and community outreach. Additionally, the Fund would provide needed additional resources to complete Operation Backpressure, a study of the qualities and characteristics of crude oil in the United States. Completion of this study is an important step because its results will inform future regulatory action.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) is currently working to improve design and safety standards for the DOT-111 tank cars that transport Bakken crude oil and other hazardous materials. Providing full funding for the Safe Transportation and Energy Products Fund is one way to support PHMSA in finalizing and implementing new rules governing the use of DOT-111 tank cars, as well as establishing a new, hardened tank car standard for the use of hauling crude oil by rail.

To further support safety improvements, we also intend to pursue full authorization of a Safe Transportation and Energy Products Fund, or similar authorities, when Congress reauthorizes rail programs later this year. The resurgence of American oil and natural gas production has created new opportunities, but also new challenges. Americans need to have confidence that transport safety issues are being addressed comprehensively.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical program, which will give U.S. Department of Transportation the flexibility and resources it needs to promote public safety, react quickly to emerging issues, and protect communities across our country from future tragedies involving the movement of energy products.

Sincerely,



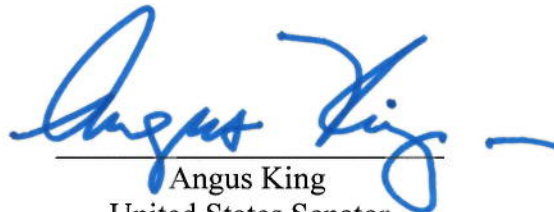
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United States Senator



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Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



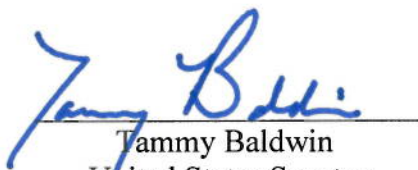
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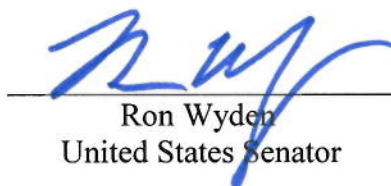
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Bernard Sanders
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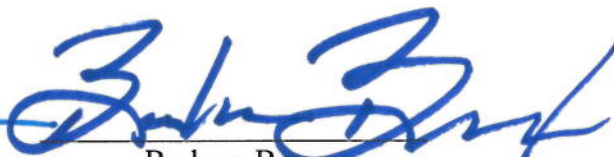
Tammy Baldwin
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Ron Wyden
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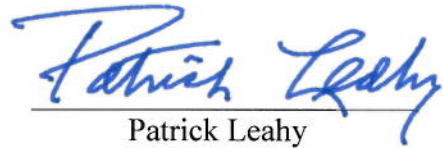
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