



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 8, 2007

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Transportation Labor Endorses Rail Safety Bill

Washington, D.C. – *Today, the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials conducted a hearing on the Federal Railroad Safety Improvement Act, H.R. 2095. The following statement was issued today by Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, who also testified at the hearing:*

“At long last, we have a bill that will significantly improve safety for railroad workers, passengers and all those who rely on or live near railroad operations. Rail safety laws should have been updated nine years ago when these laws were due for reauthorization. Chairman Jim Oberstar and Rail Subcommittee Chairwoman Corrine Brown have delivered meaningful progress on rail safety standards and we applaud their efforts.

“Railroad lobbyists successfully blocked new safety laws while the freight railroad industry pocketed at least \$25 billion in profits over the past six years. It is high time that rail executives make the safety of their employees a genuine priority instead of solely focusing on bolstering their profit margins.

“Railroad workers do not have the whistleblower protections they need to freely come forward to report safety concerns. We have reams of paper documenting harassment and intimidation regarding accident and injury reporting that cannot be ignored. Fatigue is a factor in far too many rail accidents. Workers are receiving little training and a ‘brain drain’ is occurring as veteran employees retire. Safety inspections currently cover only 0.2 percent of railroad operations, and the Federal Railroad Administration doesn’t follow up to make sure identified problems get corrected. And non-signalized track or ‘dark territory’ continues to pose safety risks despite simple and affordable technologies available. This common-sense legislation addresses these issues.

“The only ones who will tell you these changes aren’t warranted are those whose pocketbooks will be impacted. We believe the safety of rail workers and the public are worth the investment.”

For Mr. Wytkind’s written testimony, please visit www.ttd.org.

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TTD represents 32 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit www.ttd.org.

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