



October 25, 2007

***Support S. 294 – Save Amtrak  
Oppose Sununu Amendment***

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I urge you to support S. 294, a bill to reauthorize Amtrak, and oppose the Sununu amendment which would effectively dismantle and end our national passenger railroad.

For years Amtrak has been forced to limp from one financial crisis to the next and asked to do the impossible – operate a national passenger rail system without adequate support from the federal government. Maintenance has been deferred to dangerous levels, security needs have gone unaddressed, and Amtrak has simply been unable to provide the type and level of service that is so urgently needed. The myth that passenger rail should somehow turn a profit or that workers are somehow the cause of the financial mess at Amtrak must finally be put to rest. It is an unfortunate reality that Amtrak's nearly 20,000 workers, who come to work everyday in an environment of economic uncertainty, are some of the lowest paid in the industry.

Fortunately, S. 294 will finally reauthorize Amtrak and do it in a way that will actually give our national passenger rail system a real chance to thrive. Funds are allocated to ensure that Amtrak's current capital and operating needs are met, that out of service equipment be brought back into use and that the Northeast Corridor (NEC) is brought to a state of good repair. Reforms are put in place that will better ensure management accountability and improve transparency in how the railroad operates. And the bipartisan bill rejects the more draconian privatization schemes and attacks on workers that have surfaced in the debate over national passenger rail.

We are gravely concerned, however, about the Sununu amendment which would effectively end national passenger rail service by eliminating certain long distance routes. Congress should not be in the business of micromanaging Amtrak and arbitrarily picking and choosing routes which in reality would weaken or eliminate service for *all* passengers. We recently passed the sixth anniversary of the tragedy of 9/11, and we must remember the vital role an interconnected, national passenger network plays in moving people at critical times.

Amtrak is a vital transportation link to thousands of communities and is an essential component of our national transportation system. It is long past time to reauthorize Amtrak and make lasting and needed improvements to our national passenger rail system. I urge you to vote yes on S. 294 and reject the draconian "reforms" offered by Senator Sununu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward Wytkind", written over a white background.

Edward Wytkind  
President