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## **Weak Security Training for Rail Workers is a "Disgrace," Transportation Labor Tells Senate Committee**

**Washington, DC** – The lack of comprehensive, mandatory security training for rail workers is, "a disgrace," an AFL-CIO transportation labor leader told a Senate panel today, decrying that, "beyond vague warnings by the Administration and promises of action by the rail industry, little has actually been done," in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and rail bombings in London and Madrid.

In testimony before the Senate Commerce Committee, Edward Wytkind, President of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department (TTD), said "workers and their unions have been left in the dark... the workers I have spoken to inform me that they feel no safer or more prepared than before the September 11 attacks. This situation has gone on for too long and is simply unacceptable."

Wytkind cited a major freight railroad whose security training consists solely of a 14 minute video that is shown infrequently and often not to new hires. "Comprehensive security training must be mandated, and it must be instituted as soon as possible," Wytkind said, endorsing major provisions in the Committee's pending rail security legislation (S. 1052). Criticizing rail industry opposition to the provisions in S. 1052 mandating rigorous worker training programs, Wytkind said, "We hope you will reject those pleas for more inaction."

Wytkind warned that rail facilities and equipment are left poorly guarded, meaning "people can come and go virtually unchallenged." He also called for strong whistleblower protections for rail workers, urging the Committee to embrace measures that "ensure that workers who report or identify a security risk will not face retribution or retaliation from their employers."

"A rail worker should not have to choose between doing the right thing on security and his or her job," Wytkind said.

Wytkind criticized the Bush administration's call to eliminate federal funding for Amtrak and its refusal to fund vital security improvements on Amtrak's national network. Wytkind, however, praised the bipartisan leadership of the Committee for pushing to adequately fund Amtrak.

"This starvation diet that we have put Amtrak on must end ... because it creates security issues and problems that are unacceptable," Wytkind said. "We cannot expect Amtrak to fend for itself while we spend billions addressing so many aspects of homeland security and the war on terrorism."

Wytkind also noted that efforts to contract-out to the lowest bidder the work of some Amtrak on-board employees whose jobs include security- and safety-sensitive responsibilities could hinder oversight and make it more difficult to "control access to train operations."

For a copy of Wytkind's testimony, go to [www.ttd.org](http://www.ttd.org).

*TTD represents 29 member unions in the rail, aviation, transit, truck, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit [www.ttd.org](http://www.ttd.org).*

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