



July 18, 2006

**Vote TODAY for the Murray Amendment
Preserve Bargaining Rights and Fairness for Amtrak Workers**

Dear Senator:

At today's Subcommittee mark-up of the Transportation, Treasury Appropriations bill, Senator Murray will offer an amendment to strike a provision in the bill that would inappropriately interfere in the collective bargaining relationship between Amtrak and its workers. On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, I urge you to vote for this amendment and to reject one of the most anti-worker provisions ever proposed for Amtrak employees.

Workers in this country have the right to bargain collectively with their employer over wages, working conditions and related benefits. Yet the provision included in the Chairman's mark would subvert this basic right and declare Congress, not the parties, the master architect of future labor agreements at Amtrak. Specifically, the provision would require that contracts be changed to "require" employees to make "reasonable contributions to health benefit costs and permit work rule reforms..." The provision further dictates that these work rule reforms "**must, without limitation**, include provisions that reduce crew consist requirements, eliminate scope of work and job specification restrictions, increase scheduling flexibility and eliminate restrictions on contracting out of work by Amtrak." In other words, Congress would now be directly involved in setting the terms and conditions of private labor-management contracts.

There is no justification for this unprecedented intrusion into labor-management relations. Amtrak workers are already the lowest paid in the rail industry and they have given up countless concessions to keep the carrier out of bankruptcy and to avoid liquidation. In fact, Amtrak employees are working under out of date contracts and many have not seen a general wage increase in up to seven years. It is insulting and unfair to now demand that contract terms be imposed by Congress simply because the Amtrak management and Board refuse to resolve outstanding issues at the bargaining table.

This provision has not been the subject of a single hearing in neither the appropriation nor authorizing committees, and there has been no debate or consideration of this change. Furthermore, not a single rail union impacted by this provision was consulted or asked to provide its perspective on the effects of this heavy-handed intrusion into bargaining.

If this provision remains in the bill, it will undermine the political coalition that has been built to support a national Amtrak system at both the federal and state level. The Bond provision is a poison pill that promises to jeopardize passage of a strong Amtrak appropriation and must be removed during subcommittee consideration.

I urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to **vote for the Murray amendment.**

Sincerely,

Edward Wytkind
President