



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Federal Rail Safety Regulators "Asleep at the Switch," Transportation Labor Leaders Say *Call for Sweeping Reforms, End to Cozy Government-Industry Relationship***

**Las Vegas, NV** – Denouncing Bush administration regulators who are “too cozy” with giant railroad corporations, leaders of AFL-CIO transportation unions today called for Congress to adopt a rail safety bill to curb an industry that, “has clearly proven incapable of policing itself.”

At the biannual meeting of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department (TTD), union leaders unanimously adopted a policy statement urging Congress to pass a rail safety bill, and demanded greater enforcement from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), saying that the "partnership" approach pursued by the FRA does not "replace the role of an independent federal regulator that keeps an arm's length from the industry it is supposed to regulate."

At a time of mounting accidents on the rails, scathing reports from both the Transportation Department's Inspector General and the *New York Times* have cited poor safety practices by the major railroads and weak oversight and enforcement by the FRA. The reports even questioned why a former FRA leader vacationed with an industry lobbyist whose railroad was under investigation by the agency.

"For the nation's giant railroad corporations, the FRA stands for the 'Free Ride Agency,'" said Edward Wytkind, President of the AFL-CIO's Transportation Trades Department, adding that, "the lack of enforcement is absolutely unacceptable. What the agency calls a 'partnership' is just a Washington way of saying the fox is guarding the henhouse."

TTD called for a doubling of federal rail inspectors, and was sharply critical of the Bush administration failing to propose any similar increase in its Fiscal Year 2006 budget proposal, even in the face of a recent spate of horrific accidents.

The transportation labor leaders demanded that 2005 be the year that Congress overcomes over a decade of stonewalling by rail industry lobbyists and passes a comprehensive rail safety bill that grants whistle-blower protections to workers, limits use of remote control technologies, addresses long-standing fatigue and training issues, and ends "dark territories" in which there are no track signal systems. The statement called for the FRA to slow trains down in "dark territories."

Click [here](#) for the statement.

*TTD represents 35 member unions in the rail, aviation, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit [www.ttd.org](http://www.ttd.org).*

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