



NEWS RELEASE

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Railroad Safety Legislation Long Overdue

Transportation labor testifies in Senate hearing as House considers legislation

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, testified before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee about rail safety. Meanwhile, the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials met to consider H.R. 2095, the Federal Railroad Safety Act. Below are excerpts from Mr. Wytkind's Senate testimony:

"It is our sincere hope that this year, the safety of the American public and railroad workers will prevail over private interests. For too long rail industry profits have trumped safety – as a result our members have waited far too long for congressional action on a number of important safety initiatives..."

"Congress must beef up the federal rail inspector force and impose a significant increase in fines against railroads that violate safety rules. It is shocking to learn that the average fine levied against a railroad for a safety rule infraction is \$39. Due to the accident in Oneida in March, the Federal Railroad Administration conducted an audit of CSX track in upstate New York and found 78 defects and one serious violation. Beefed up fines will play a deterrent role if Congress acts..."

"Fatigue in the rail industry has reached a crisis. There are many cases in which the railroads should have learned lessons. In Macdona, Texas in June 2004, three people died, and 30 more suffered respiratory injuries when two trains collided, releasing chlorine gas. The National Transportation Safety Board accident report describes a work schedule where 11 of the engineer's previous work days were 14-hour work days, with one 22-hour day. Worker fatigue was cited as the probable cause of the accident..."

"Action is also needed to address the culture of employee intimidation and harassment that is pervasive in this industry. Documented cases show a management culture of harassing and suppressing information regarding reportable injuries – using heavy handed, often illegal, tactics to disguise the facts."

For Mr. Wytkind's full 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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