



*A bold voice for transportation workers*

June 29, 2018

### **Cosponsor H.R. 3148 the Railroad Yardmaster Protection Act**

Dear Representative,

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I ask that you cosponsor H.R. 3148, "The Railroad Yardmaster Protection Act." This important and overdue legislation would cover railroad Yardmasters under the Hours of Service (HOS) protections that are currently afforded to other safety sensitive rail sector employees.

Federal hours of service laws play an important role in preventing fatigue in the rail workforce and have helped keep the nation's rail system safe for over a century. These laws set maximum on-duty periods, minimum off-duty periods, and mandatory days off for locomotive engineers, conductors, signalmen, and dispatchers. When properly administered, hours of service requirements help prevent the fatigue-related accidents and mistakes that result from an overworked and exhausted workforce.

Unfortunately, yardmasters have been exempted from hours of service laws despite the crucial role they play in the safe and efficient operation of railroads. Yardmasters are charged with managing all activity in rail yards, including managing the work flow in the yard and track use of inbound/outbound trains, communicating and coordinating with yard track users, and interacting with different operating yard employees. This must be carefully and precisely orchestrated in a yard environment that is fast paced and subject to constant changes in train makeups, track occupancies and assignments, track conditions and traffic flow. Further complicating the matter, yardmasters are assigned to oversee multiple rail yards simultaneously and manage traffic flow onto the main track. With this extensive list of responsibilities, yardmasters serve as the linchpin for safe rail operations, yet they are not considered safety sensitive employees under existing law, and are thus exempt from HOS requirements.

The lack of HOS coverage for yardmasters is further exacerbated by employers routinely rotating these workers into other HOS-covered roles, such as switchman, for 12 hour shifts over five consecutive days and then returning to their yardmaster duties for the remaining two days of the week. In doing so, employers are exploiting a loophole in the law that undermines the very purpose of HOS for covered employees and needlessly increases safety risks in the rail industry. Covering yardmasters under HOS laws will ensure that these laws are being fully adhered to by all safety sensitive employees.

**Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO**

815 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW / 4<sup>th</sup> Floor / Washington DC 20006

Tel: 202.628.9262 / Fax: 202.628.0391 / [www.ttd.org](http://www.ttd.org)

Larry I. Willis, President / Greg Regan, Secretary-Treasurer



H.R. 3148 would finally bring parity to yardmasters, and further improve the safety of our national rail network. This bill would limit yardmaster shifts to 12 hours of work per day and 10 hours of uninterrupted rest before the next work shift and ensure a well-rested workplace and safe working conditions in rail yards across the country.

I urge you to cosponsor H.R. 3148- the Railroad Yardmaster Protection Act and prioritize safety on our nation's railroads.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Larry I. Willis".

Larry I. Willis  
President