

June 30, 2026

Dear Representative,

On behalf of our affiliated unions representing hundreds of thousands of workers who build, operate, and maintain our nation's transportation networks, the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), urges you to **VOTE NO on Obernolte Amendment #226 (Rules #408) in the FY 2027 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 8800).**

This amendment sets a concerning new precedent by using a Department of Defense logistics pilot as a backdoor to pressure or bypass rail safety oversight by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). The reporting requirements specifically require identification of “*safety or regulatory constraint[s]*,” including those resulting from railroad operating rules. That language could easily turn proven FRA safety regulations, as well as railroad operating rules and established worker safety practices into obstacles to be overcome rather than protections to be respected.

This amendment authorizes a pilot to deploy novel and untested autonomous freight platforms capable of operating on both public roads, railroad infrastructure, and our nation's ports including rail yards, spurs, and sidings, depots, and military logistics nodes, without establishing meaningful safety guardrails. This amendment also allows for demonstrations involving loads compatible with ISO containers, which can carry hazardous materials. Yet, the amendment does not clearly require adherence to existing safety regulations and fails to consider even basic safety needs such as a workforce safety plan, minimum staffing levels, training requirements, emergency shutdown protocols, or incident reporting to the FRA, among others.

Further, the proposed pilot calls for metrics and evaluation to collect and assess performance data for activities conducted under such pilot program. Establishing programs that track and collect data can have a downstream impact on workers and be used to track worker-specific performance data along the supply chain. Data collection cannot be weaponized to create production quotas or undermine the collective bargaining process.

Lastly, the proposed pilot short-circuits the established waiver and test program that allows for the development and testing of new technology in controlled environments, with opportunities for public hearings and stakeholder involvement to inform the safety conditions necessary to keep workers and the public safe. **Members should not support a pilot that treats proven rail safety rules as deployment barriers and collects data that can be used to track worker productivity along the supply chain,** especially for technology intended to operate on or near rail infrastructure, ports, yards, and intermodal facilities without any input from the workers whose jobsites would be directly affected.

We urge you to stand with the men and women working at our nation's railyards and ports by **voting NO on the Obernolte Amendment #226 (Rules #408)**.

For any questions or further information, please contact Nawaid Ladak at NawaidL@ttd.org.

Sincerely,

Greg Regan, President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Regan', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO