

November ??, 2022

Majority Leader Chuck Schumer
U.S. Senate
S-221 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Republican Leader Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senate
S-230 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Republican Leader Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Republican Leader McConnell, and Republican Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of our collective food and agricultural memberships, we write to urge swift action to avert a rail strike or lockout that would lead to shutdowns or slowdowns of rail-dependent facilities resulting in devastating consequences to our national and global food security.

President Biden and his administration successfully brokered an agreement between the National Railway Labor Conference (NRLC) and twelve unions on September 15. Unfortunately, two unions have voted to not ratify while members of four others continue to review the agreement. Due to a combination of the non-ratification votes and the NRLC advising through a press release that “now is not the time to introduce new demands,” Congressional action will be necessary if the parties fail to reach agreement. Currently, the next potential rail shutdown is scheduled for November 19, and we urge Congress to be prepared to act quickly when arriving back in session on November 14.

We recommend Congress either order both sides to accept the current agreement that is based on the Presidential Emergency Board recommendations or to order mandatory, binding arbitration. A strike combined with existing challenges in the rail system, at our ports, with trucking and with record low water levels on the Mississippi River impacting numerous barge shipments would be catastrophic for the agricultural and broader U.S. economies. Congress must act to prevent this from occurring if the parties cannot reach agreement.

Resolution of this dispute prior to November 19 is necessary to ensure rail service continues uninterrupted. We thank you for your responsiveness to this imminent supply chain issue.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Transportation Working Group

Agricultural Retailers Association
Agriculture Transportation Coalition
American Beverage Association
American Feed Industry Association
Consumer Brands Association
Forest Resources Association
Fresh Produce association of the Americas
International Fresh Produce Association
Leather and Hide Council of America
Meat Import Council of America
National Aquaculture Association
National Corn Growers Association

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grange
North American Meat Institute
North American Renderers Association
Pet Food Institute
United Dairymen of Arizona
USA Rice

cc: Senate Environment and Public Works Committee Members
Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Members
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Members