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Clarence E. Anthony

May 8, 2023

Members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives:

America's small communities ask for your support of the bipartisan [Railway Safety Act of 2023 \(S.576\)](#), which would help prevent toxic train derailments and ensure rail moves safely through our communities and our country.

The burning toxic train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, was jarring for small local governments to see. We know that a single train derailment can ruin the economic potential of the small communities we represent and serve. Without Congress passing rail safety legislation, there is little local governments or even the Federal Railroad Administration can do to improve the train derailment record in the U.S.

Three trains derail each day in the U.S., and close to half of trains are reported to be carrying a hazardous substance as trains have gotten longer. This risk is too high to our communities.

Derailments can ruin a communities' economy and future overnight. Our first responders take on the most dangerous task of heading into toxic fire often without full information about what is on the trains. Our community has to evacuate citizens from their homes and handle the immediate health and safety issues. Any nearby farms have to handle crop losses, and any businesses impacted directly or indirectly must shutter or rebuild. In situations like East Palestine, the long-term economy can falter as the price of homes and businesses dive leaving residents with few options and then depleting local government revenue which funds schools, first responders, infrastructure and more.

Each derailment is a potential disaster, and Congress should not wait any longer to act on bipartisan rail safety legislation that address key rail issues that have reasonable and clear solutions. Just after East Palestine's toxic derailment, small towns like Raymond, MN, and Paradise, MT, have seen full scale evacuations from trains on fire and pristine tourism areas polluted. Train derailments cause local economic derailment, and no clean-up effort can truly make a community whole after a dangerous derailment no matter how long the railroad stays.

Experts have made it clear that derailments are preventable with good maintenance, safety standards and technology. Congress must set that safety performance bar or continue to watch community after community bear the economic consequences of train derailments. Rail remains important to our country, but its operation should never be at the expense of three communities facing economic disaster every day.

We ask for your commitment to support rail safety legislation this Congress without delay.

Thank you,

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