

September 13, 2022

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

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

Railroads and rail labor have until 12:01 a.m. on September 16 to reach a labor agreement that would prevent a lockout or strike. We continue to urge these negotiators to remain at the table and work in good faith to come to an agreement. However, should the parties not be able to come to terms, the undersigned members of the Agricultural Transportation Working Group (ATWG)¹ and other food and agriculture industry partners implore Congress to remain in session and act immediately to prevent a rail strike or lockout to avoid significant economic damage to U.S. supply chains and further uncertainty for rail customers.

The U.S. rail network moves critical agricultural inputs and significant quantities of agricultural products. These essential items are transported by rail to domestic facilities and to ports for export abroad. A complete stoppage of the rail system would lead to shutdowns or slowdowns of rail-dependent facilities resulting in devastating consequences to our national and global food security.

Leaders around the world are already concerned about food shortages and famine due to drought and geopolitical challenges, such as the invasion of Ukraine, which accounts for ten percent of the global exports of wheat. A freight rail stoppage would occur as America's farmers harvest their crops and would exacerbate global food insecurity and likely contribute to further geopolitical instability in regions that experience famine. Congress must be willing to act to ensure our farmers and ranchers can continue to help feed the world.

The freight rail system already is significantly challenged and many rail customers are not receiving timely rail service. A complete stoppage of rail service, even for a single day, would escalate these challenges. Most freight railroads currently lack extra capacity to make up for down time. Thus, a sizable portion of freight backlogged due to a stoppage may never be made up leading to less production from rail-dependent businesses to the detriment of producers and consumers.

Moreover, inflation is impacting all Americans. Today, the Bureau of Labor Statistics announced that food-at-home prices were up 13.5% over the past year, the highest level since 1979. This is a stark reminder of how

¹ The ATWG is comprised of associations representing farmers, ranchers, food and beverage manufacturers, processors, package suppliers, farm supply dealers, logistical service providers and agricultural marketers that support and sustain millions of American jobs. Our members provide safe, abundant, affordable, and sustainably produced human and animal food, fiber, and agricultural goods essential to the health and well-being of tens of millions of U.S. and global consumers. Reliable railroad freight transportation is essential to meet these objectives.

high the stakes are as a freight rail stoppage would drastically make inflation worse, especially for those who can least afford it.

Therefore, we urge Congress to stay in session and prepare to intervene without delay, if necessary, to prevent a rail stoppage of any duration. Uninterrupted rail service is vital to the American agricultural economy, and we thank you for your responsiveness to this potentially significant supply chain issue.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Transportation Working Group

Agricultural Retailers Association
AgTC - Agriculture Transportation Coalition
Amcot
American Bakers Association
American Cotton Producers
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Feed Industry Association
American Fruit and Vegetable Processors and Growers Coalition
American Malting Barley Association
American Pulse Association
American Sheep Industry Association
American Soybean Association
American Spice Trade Association
Beer Institute
Can Manufacturers Institute
Commodity Markets Council
Consumer Brands Association
Corn Refiners Association
Cottonseed and Feed Association
Distilled Spirits Council of the United States
FMI -The Food Industry Association
Fresh Produce Association of the Americas
Global Cold Chain Alliance
Growth Energy
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils
International Dairy Foods Association
International Fresh Produce Association
Juice Products Association
Leather and Hide Council of America
Meat Import Council of America
National Aquaculture Association
National Association of Chemical Distributors (NACD)
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Chicken Council
National Confectioners Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Cotton Council
National Cotton Ginners Association
National Cottonseed Products Association

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Grain and Feed Association
National Grange
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Sunflower Association
National Turkey Federation
North American Meat Institute
North American Millers' Association
North American Renderers Association
Peanut and Tree Nut Processors Association
Pet Food Institute
Renewable Fuels Association
SNAC International
Soy Transportation Coalition
The Association for Dressings & Sauces
The Fertilizer Institute
USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council
USA Rice
U.S. Canola Association
US Pea & Lentil Trade Association
US Rice Producers Association
Western Growers

cc: Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Members
cc: Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee Members
cc: House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Members
cc: House Agriculture Committee Members