

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

We write you today on a matter of grave urgency. Once again, our nation is facing the threat of a major rail strike between the major freight railroads and 12 labor unions, the second such time in less than three months. A stoppage of rail service for any duration will be extremely damaging to American families and our economy, costing \$2 billion dollars per day. As provided for under federal law and consistent with past practice, Congress must be prepared to intervene to ensure continued rail service should the parties fail to reach a voluntary agreement before the end of the current “cooling off” period on November 19.

Many businesses and communities rely on regular, uninterrupted rail service. The uncertainty of rail service during this year’s protracted contract negotiations are creating enormous anxiety. In September, the mere possibility of a rail service stoppage created significant disruptions to the timely delivery of critical goods and products. The freight railroads must safely reduce operations and secure their customers’ goods days in advance of a potential strike, meaning businesses and communities saw interruptions in the delivery of fertilizers, chlorine, and other products essential to clean water, our food supply, and electricity generation. With a strike possibly occurring as soon as November 19 then rail shipments will be affected as early as November 14 – the day Congress returns from recess.

A potential rail strike only adds to the headwinds facing the U.S. economy. A rail stoppage would immediately lead to supply shortages and higher prices. The cessation of Amtrak and commuter rail services would disrupt up to 7 million travelers a day. Many businesses would see their sales disrupted right in the middle of the critical holiday shopping season. Even a short-term rail strike would have enormous impacts. The American agricultural community could see disruptions in transporting 6,300 carloads of food and farm products that are carried by rail daily. It would also halt the delivery of key chemicals necessary to our communities including chlorine, which is necessary for effective water and wastewater treatment operations. In many cases, businesses and communities rely on regular rail service and may not have significant reserves, even in the event of a short-term strike.

No one wins when the railroads stop running. Congress recognized their necessity to interstate commerce and our nation’s economic health with the passage of the Railway Labor Act and past congressional interventions in rail labor disputes when other steps fail. Indeed, Congress has intervened 18 times since 1926 in labor negotiations that threaten interstate commerce and there is no reason why Congress should deviate from this record today. While a voluntary agreement between the major freight railroads and the 12 unions is the best outcome, the risks to our nation’s economy and communities simply make a national rail strike unacceptable. Therefore, should there not be a voluntary agreement prior to Congress reconvening, we call on you to take immediate steps upon your return to prevent a national rail strike and the certain economic destruction that would follow.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,