

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Cosponsors, votes to advance Bipartisan railway safety legislation

Posted on Wednesday, May 10, 2023

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, voted to advance the bipartisan *Railway Safety Act of 2023* to improve freight rail safety and prevent train derailment disasters like in East Palestine, Ohio. Senator Baldwin cosponsors the legislation.

“Big rail companies have used their sky-high profits to line the pockets of their investors, not invest in the safety of our communities and their workers – and we have seen the devastating consequences,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “We have to do everything we can to ensure disasters like in East Palestine never happen again, and today, Democrats and Republicans came together to take a step toward doing just that. I am proud to cosponsor and vote for the *Railway Safety Act of 2023* and better protect our communities near railroads, support rail workers, and keep our Made in Wisconsin economy moving forward.”

The legislation passed the Senate Commerce Committee by a vote of 16-11 and now awaits a vote by the full Senate. The legislation is led by Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and JD Vance (R-OH) and also cosponsored by Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Bob Casey (D-PA), Josh Hawley (R-MO), John Fetterman (D-PA), Tina Smith (D-MN), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Mike Braun (R-IN), Mitt Romney (R-UT), and Roger Marshall (R-KS).

The *Railway Safety Act of 2023* takes key steps to strengthen rail safety. The legislation:

1. Mandates the use of defect detection technology which could have prevented the East Palestine derailment, making them more frequent near dense urban areas.
2. Expands the types of hazardous materials, like the vinyl chloride carried by the East Palestine train, that trigger increased safety regulations, including speed restrictions, better braking, and route risk analysis.
3. Improves emergency response by providing states information about the hazardous materials being transported by rail through their communities and strengthening railroad emergency response plans.
4. Prevents 30-second railcar inspections and mandates a new requirement that ensures railcars are properly maintained.
5. Increases penalties for violations of rail safety law to ensure safety laws are taken seriously.
6. Requires two crewmembers to operate a train to prevent a situation where only one person is on the train in an emergency.
7. Ensures firefighters are made whole after responding to major derailments.
8. Expands the existing Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness grant to allow fire departments to purchase the personal protective gear that keeps them safe.