

# U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Reintroduces legislation to improve freight rail service for American businesses

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Roger Marshall (R-KS) introduced the *Reliable Rail Service Act* to help address the unreliable service and high costs of rail shipping for American businesses. The legislation, which is supported by members of the agriculture industry, labor organizations, energy producers, and manufacturers, ensures the largest freight railroads provide American businesses reliable services at reasonable rates to deliver Made in Wisconsin products to market more efficiently and bring down costs for consumers.

“Wisconsin farmers, producers, and manufacturers rely on rail service to get their Made in Wisconsin products to market, and they shouldn’t have to pay sky-high prices for subpar rail service,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “Ensuring our agriculture, energy, and manufacturing businesses have reliable rail service will be crucial in leveling the playing field for Wisconsin businesses who depend on rail service and helping cut costs for working families. I’m proud to reintroduce my *Reliable Rail Service Act* to keep our Made in Wisconsin economy moving forward.”

“I frequently hear from Kansans that the service of Class 1 railroads is not living up to the expectations,” **said Senator Marshall.** “These service failures hurt our shippers who use the rail to deliver their products to key export facilities, that’s why the Staggers Act of 1980 must be modernized to clearly define railroad’s common carrier obligations. The multitude of organizations supporting this bill is a testament to how dire this situation truly is. I’m happy to explore bipartisan solutions with my colleague Senator Baldwin.”

Rail shippers including farmers, energy producers, and manufacturers continue to

face poor service, significant service disruptions, and sky-high prices that are impacting communities, and consumers, all while the nation's largest railroads' [profits are at record highs](#).

The *Reliable Rail Service Act* takes a commonsense approach to addressing high-costs and unreliable service by clarifying the "common carrier obligation," which under current law requires rail carriers to serve the wider shipping public "on reasonable request." Current ambiguity around this principle has contributed to insufficient rail services and exorbitant costs for American products to get to market. Clearly defining the "common carrier obligation" has taken on greater importance as the railroad industry faces consolidation and has undertaken Wall Street practices that reduce capacity on the rail network.

The bill establishes specific criteria for the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to consider when evaluating whether carriers are meeting their common carrier obligation to give shippers much-needed certainty that is currently lacking.

The *Reliable Rail Service Act* has earned widespread industry support, including 50 agricultural, labor, manufacturing, and transportation organizations. A full list of endorsing organizations and quotes of support can be found [here](#).

"If we want to fix our supply chain and make more things in America rather than in places like China - we need to make sure freight rail can deliver," **said Chris Jahn, President and Chief Executive Officer of the American Chemistry Council.** "Senators Baldwin and Marshall have put together a sensible solution aimed at addressing ongoing freight rail service failures that all members of Congress should be interested in solving. We urge Democrats and Republicans support to support this legislation, which will help ensure railroads live up to their obligation to provide reliable service."

"Clarification of the common carrier obligation has been needed for decades and this bipartisan bill provides STB with clear oversight rules to help address our nation's freight railroad supply chain challenges and improve rail service for agricultural shippers," **said Mike Seyfert, President and CEO of the National Grain and Feed Association.** "NGFA members appreciate Sen. Baldwin and Sen. Marshall's leadership in responding to rail service issues and for cosponsoring this legislation, which will help regulators respond to service disruptions that cause hardship for livestock producers, grain exporters, and grain processing facilities."

“We applaud Senators Baldwin and Marshall for introducing the *Reliable Rail Service Act* to improve our nation’s freight rail network,” **said President Greg Regan, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO.** “Unfortunately, America’s freight rail companies too often fail to provide the equal, timely, and affordable service required of them by federal law. Let’s hold railroads accountable and better serve the small businesses, farmers, and other customers who rely on freight rail to transport their goods.”

“Forests in the Great Lakes and in particular Wisconsin, are healthy and productive because of sustainable silvicultural practices. At one time rail played a critical supporting role with cost effective and efficient transportation of raw and finished products. When implemented as intended the *Reliable Rail Service Act* will help restore the critical service needed to support this vital industry once more,” **said Troy Brown, President of the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association.**

“The Wisconsin Farm Bureau appreciates the work of Sen. Baldwin to address the definition of common carrier service obligation and increase the authority of the Surface Transportation Board to address agricultural rail needs,” **said Kevin Krentz, President of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation.** “Wisconsin farmers are dependent on the movement of agricultural goods by rail and we hope this increased authority will lead to greater efficiency within the rail industry.”

A one-pager on the legislation is available [here](#). Support for this legislation can be found [here](#). Full text of the legislation is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).