

Dear Senator _____,

I am concerned that Amtrak, America's nationwide intercity rail passenger service, has enacted a new policy that will curtail the operation of charter and special trains, except in very limited instances, and severely limit the operation of privately owned railroad passenger cars in Amtrak service on scheduled trains. These charters and private car operations produce several million dollars of revenue to Amtrak every year and Amtrak is actively refusing their business.

Amtrak's employee advisory of March 28, 2018, states that it has made this decision so the corporation can focus on its "core" business, which is primarily providing safe, on time, and comfortable rail passenger service to the American public. While this focus on improving the service, cleanliness, and over all rail passenger service experience is the right thing to do, Amtrak is losing a reliable revenue stream by refusing to service requests from citizens who wish to be able to charter a train to a special event, such as a sporting competition or festival, or be able to operate a private railroad car on an Amtrak train for a group of senior citizens, business people or leisure travelers who want a more upscale rail vehicle to travel upon than Amtrak can offer from its fleet.

Private cars also make significant contributions to local economies, either when visiting a city and bringing one or two carloads of passengers, or especially when they are operated in special trains. It is estimated by the local chamber of commerce that the New River Gorge trains, which operate two weekends in the fall each year, bring in over \$4 million to the economies of Huntington WV and surrounding areas.

The economic impact figures are frequently greater for steam-hauled excursion trains, such as the N&W 611 trips (8 proposed operating days in 2018), which attract people from all over the world. They too would have generated several million tourism dollars in the communities that they would have visited, both via lodging and meals for out of town passengers and direct income to local businesses who provide services to the train operations. In most cases these excursions are operated by local historical and educational 501(c)(3) organizations. In some cases, the loss of the income from private car and excursion operations will result in the organizations being unable to continue in their missions.

Amtrak, through its initial charter written in 1970, enacted in 1971 and ensuing changes over its 47-year life, has for all intents and purposes been given a monopoly over intercity rail passenger service in the United States. Because of liability issues relating to operation of rail passenger service, the major freight rail carriers will not consider operating a special train without insurance coverage that is generally unaffordable for the chartering party. Amtrak's liability coverage satisfies the freight carriers' requirements while making the operation of charter and special trains affordable. Because of the nature of the legislation that created Amtrak, it holds almost exclusively access to operating these sorts of services on the national rail network in America. For Amtrak to refuse to operate charter trains and to severely limit the circumstances under which it will transport private cars causes me grave concern as to how Amtrak will further limit availability of

their services to the public in the future. It may be time for our Congress to reconsider Amtrak's role in the American transportation system and to investigate why Amtrak is refusing business that actually provides a positive revenue stream for the taxpayers who support their operation. Amtrak's charter, unrealistically, requires Amtrak to be a "for-profit" corporation. This new Amtrak policy does nothing to encourage additional revenue sources and possibly unfairly restricts potential customer access to intercity rail passenger service.

I look forward to your response and appreciate your efforts to assist in this matter.

Sincerely,
