



Contact: Chad Kolton  
202-789-4365  
ckolton@hdmk.org

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## **STATE AG DEPARTMENTS CALL ON CONGRESS & PRESIDENT TO PASS RAIL REFORM THIS FALL**

### *National Association Endorses Bipartisan Legislation to Increase Competition & Provide Fairness to Railroad Pricing*

WASHINGTON – Highlighting a joint study by the U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Transportation which found that the railroad industry’s exemption from federal antitrust laws and ineffective federal regulation result in artificially high freight rail rates, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) adopted a resolution calling on Congress and President Obama to enact bipartisan freight rail reform legislation in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress.

The NASDA resolution called for enactment of S.2889, the Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization Act and S.146 and H.R. 233, the Railroad Antitrust Enforcement Act. It was introduced by the Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture (WASDA) and the Midwestern Association of State Departments of Agriculture (MASDA).

“The Midwest and West’s dependence on moving agriculture commodities from farm to market means that we need affordable, reliable freight rail and access to competitive rates,” said Gene Hugoson, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. “This resolution underscores our support for local farmers and our commitment to working with Congress to get rail reform passed this year.”

“Transportation is critical to American agriculture. Excessive freight charges hurt not only American farmers, but also American families and consumers who are trying to make ends meet in this rough economy,” said Glenn English, Chairman of Consumers United for Rail Equity (CURE), a coalition of freight rail customers seeking changes in federal law to allow for more competitive railroad pricing and reliable service. “The railroads have been getting rich at the expense of American consumers by charging unfair and needlessly high rates to thousands of American businesses with no access to transportation competition. Congress and the president can restore fairness by enacting rail reform this year.”

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) represents the secretaries, commissioners and directors of agriculture for all fifty states.

The Midwestern Association of State Department of Agriculture ([www.nasda.org/masda](http://www.nasda.org/masda)) represents the state departments of agriculture in the development, implementation, and communication of sound public policy and programs that support and promote the American agricultural industry, while protecting consumers and the environment. MASDA member states include: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

The Western Association of State Departments of Agriculture ([www.nasda.org/wasda](http://www.nasda.org/wasda)) is a multi-state organization under the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA). WASDA represents state departments of agriculture secretaries, commissioners, and directors from the following states: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Alberta and British Columbia are affiliate members and are invited to participate in the regional discussions.

Excerpts of the NASDA rail reform resolution:

- 75 percent of agricultural areas in the nation lost rail competition from 1992 to 2007
- Antitrust law is vital to protect competition, yet the freight rail industry today is mostly exempt from this law
- Agricultural commodities historically have been charged higher rates than traffic with more access to competition
- Rail rates for moving grain and oilseeds increased 46 percent from 2003 – 2007, while rates for moving other commodities increased 32 percent for the same period
- Railroad fuel surcharges, from 2001 to 2007, were 55 percent higher than the incremental cost of fuel

For more information about CURE, please visit [www.railcure.org](http://www.railcure.org).