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## **Statement On Senate Commerce Committee's Unanimous Approval of the Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization Act**

WASHINGTON, D.C.- Glenn English, Chairman of Consumers United for Rail Equity (CURE), a coalition of freight rail customers seeking changes in federal law and policy that would require railroads to provide more competitive pricing and reliable service, issued the following statement following the Senate Commerce Committee's unanimous approval today of the Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization Act:

"We are pleased and encouraged that a Surface Transportation Board reauthorization bill that reforms some key policies of the Board has been unanimously reported out of the Senate Commerce Committee under the leadership of Chairman Rockefeller, who has long advocated the interests of all rail customers. This legislation promises the first reauthorization of the STB since its creation in 1995 and the hope for an improved railroad regulatory program for rail customers.

"This is historic legislation. It is the first bill since 1980 to move out of the Senate Commerce Committee with customer-advocated improvements in the freight rail regulatory program, although a number of implementation issues would still be left in the hands of an expanded and strengthened STB. We are pleased that Senator Rockefeller committed to work with Senator Klobuchar and others to include antitrust provisions in this legislation before it is considered by the full Senate.

"The current freight rail system lacks competition and effective oversight, resulting in excessive shipping rates that hurt the U.S. economy and cost American jobs. A report by the Consumer Federation of America found that these artificially high shipping costs translated into an estimated \$3 billion in higher prices for consumers.

"There is still much work to be done to see the consumer-oriented reforms included in this bill, as well as others advocated by freight rail shippers, enacted into law and implemented. But this bill is an important step forward in the long effort to increase fairness and competition in the nation's freight rail system.

"We are extremely grateful for Chairman Rockefeller's long-standing commitment to fairness for freight rail customers – especially captive shippers, who suffer most under the current system – and the priority he has given this issue since assuming the chairmanship of the Committee. We also appreciate the leadership provided by Senators Kay Bailey Hutchison, Frank Lautenberg and John Thune in working with Chairman Rockefeller to develop this consensus legislation. Finally, we thank all members of the committee who have stood with rail customers on this effort for a number of years, including particularly Senators Dorgan, Vitter, Klobuchar and Cantwell."

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