

# JOHN THUNE

U.S. SENATOR *for* SOUTH DAKOTA

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## What They're Saying About Bipartisan Surface Transportation Board Reforms

Here's what key stakeholders are saying about U.S. Sen. John Thune's (R-S.D.) bipartisan Surface Transportation Board (STB) Reauthorization Act of 2015, which is heading to the president for his signature:

*"We are excited and encouraged by the passage of this STB reform," said Jerry Cope, manager at Dakota Mill and Grain. "It makes sense and is a credible, positive change with real impact for South Dakota's Ag shippers."*

*"Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson have demonstrated tremendous leadership for advancing a balanced and reasonable bill that will improve how the Surface Transportation Board (STB) addresses freight rail issues," said Cal Dooley, president and CEO of the American Chemistry Council. "The STB Reauthorization Act updates the Board for the first time since it was created 20 years ago and contains many important changes that will help foster a strong and efficient freight rail system."*

*"We are pleased to see the passage of S. 808 as it will allow the STB to be more proactive in resolving freight rail issues that have kept ethanol from being delivered in a timely manner in recent years," said Tom Buis, co-chairman of Growth Energy. "We appreciate Senator Thune's important leadership on this legislation as well as the efforts of Senator Nelson and applaud its passage."*

*"We extend our sincere thanks to Sens. Thune and Nelson and Congressmen Shuster and DeFazio for their leadership in support of a modernized Surface Transportation Board," said Chris Jahn, president of the Fertilizer Institute. "The rail transportation marketplace has changed a great deal over the past twenty years, and S. 808 is a significant step to better reflect this new reality. We look forward to working with the STB and Congressional leaders as S. 808 is implemented, and toward future efforts to ensure the U.S. freight rail industry continues to be the best in the world."*

*"The steel industry depends on a healthy, functioning rail network to support the movement of raw materials and finished steel products, and the SMA therefore supports regulatory and legislative reforms that improve the efficiency, effectiveness and equitability of STB proceedings, without undermining the ability of the railroads to function and make needed investments," said Philip K. Bell, president of the Steel Manufacturers Association. "Passage of S. 808 would be a positive step in the promotion of rail competition, and we are extremely appreciative of Senator Thune's leadership."*

*"The Auto Alliance welcomes passage of the STB Reauthorization Act of 2015 and thanks Chairman Thune for his leadership on this important issue," said Mitch Bainwol, president and CEO of the Auto Alliance. "Automakers rely heavily on railroads to ship finished vehicles to dealer lots and ports throughout the country. S. 808 will help avoid disruptive rail service delays like those experienced by our industry in recent years and will provide the STB the necessary tools to oversee today's modern freight rail industry."*

*"AF&PA is pleased that the House passed the Surface Transportation Board (STB) Reauthorization Act (S. 808) today and that the bill is on its way to be signed by the president," said Donna Harman, president and CEO of the American Forest & Paper Association. "I especially want to thank Commerce Committee*

*Chairman John Thune (R-S.D.) for his efforts to pass this important legislation. S. 808 will authorize funds for the STB through 2020 and will make critical improvements to the board and its operations that will help address rail service issues for the forest products industry.”*

*“The American Farm Bureau Federation commends Congress on passage of S. 808 which makes important improvements to the Surface Transportation Board,” said **Bob Stallman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation**. “All forms of transportation play a critical role in moving agricultural products, but farmers and ranchers can be especially dependent on freight rail. S. 808 updates the STB, enhances critical oversight and helps to ensure opportunities for agriculture well into the future.”*

*“Farmers, as rail customers, rely on efficient freight service to deliver their goods to market,” said **Roger Johnson, president of the National Farmers Union**. “But over the last several years farmers have experienced significant disruptions in this service. The legislation passed today will begin to address some of these problems for the benefit of America’s family farmers. We are thankful for Senator Thune’s efforts in championing this long overdue reform.”*

*“An efficient and economical freight rail system is critical to farmers and the agricultural retailers who supply their inputs,” said **Daren Coppock, president and CEO of the Agriculture Retailers Association**. “Rail delays and associated increases in shipping costs, the time and expense necessary to bring even a small case before the Board, and the lack of competitive options in some locations all highlight the need for a more independent STB.”*

*“America’s electric utilities depend on a stable fuel supply in order to generate reliable and affordable electricity for all customers,” **Tom Kuhn, president of the Edison Electric Institute**. “Often coal shipments are not priced competitively in certain areas of the country, and the process to seek relief has become a time-consuming and costly exercise that can take several years and cost millions of dollars, ultimately hurting customers. This important legislation makes modest and commonsense improvements to make the STB more effective and efficient in resolving these issues, and will have a positive benefit for shippers and electricity customers. These reforms include streamlined rate cases, expanding the board’s membership, and allowing the STB to take up investigations on its own.”*

*“We applaud Senator Thune’s legislation which provides essential reforms that will improve the Surface Transportation Board’s (STB’s) ability to operate and oversee the nation’s freight rail system,” said **Randy Gordon, president of the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA)**. “Shippers and receivers of agricultural products rely heavily on rail transportation and partner with the nation’s rail carriers to get commodities to market. However, the STB needs to have the right tools to provide the necessary oversight of freight railroads. That is what was envisioned when the Staggers Rail Act was enacted in 1980, and is even more important today given the consolidation of the nation’s rail network. Of particular importance to U.S. farmers and agribusinesses are the bill’s provisions that provide the STB with the authority to investigate rail practices that have national or regional significance on its own initiative, without having to wait for a shipper to file a formal complaint, which can be a difficult, time-consuming and costly process. It also provides for increased transparency regarding the status of STB proceedings and its handling and resolution of complaints, and provides for more collaborative deliberation among STB commissioners to enhance their ability to make sound, reasoned decisions. Taken as a whole, this legislation goes a long way in improving and strengthening the STB so it can carry out its statutory responsibilities and provide the meaningful safeguards intended under existing law.”*

*“The Alliance for Rail Competition (ARC), a diverse group of shippers and industry trade associations, including agriculture, supports the goals of Chairman Thune in S. 808, Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization and further congratulates Congress for passing this forward looking reauthorization effort,” said **Terry Whiteside, chairman of the Alliance for Rail Competition**. “It will provide the framework for and development of a more pro-active STB while allowing shippers and railroads to work towards economic*

*solutions to transportation issues facing them. ARC and the Rail Customer Coalition have worked tirelessly with Congressional leaders on molding these much needed provisions in the transportation environment.”*

*“The members of The National Industrial Transportation League, the nation’s oldest and most diverse association of shippers, fully support enactment of S. 808, the Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization Act of 2015,” said **Bruce Carlton, president and CEO of the National Industrial Transportation League.***

*“For years now, League members have been seeking the kinds of thoughtful, commonsense initiatives included in this bill, such as establishing meaningful timelines for the agency’s decision-making process and making that process more transparent. They are grateful for the Commerce Committee’s bipartisan efforts under Chairman Thune’s leadership, and the excellent work by the Committee’s professional staff. We expect this legislation, coupled with continued Congressional oversight of the STB, will improve the agency’s performance for the benefit of both the nation’s freight railroads and their customers.”*

*“The STB is meant to provide oversight of the nation’s railroads in order to ensure rail shippers have a fair and impartial venue for their concerns about rail policy,” said **Ann Warner, executive director of the Freight Rail Customer Alliance.** “Enacting S. 808 is an essential first step in reforming the STB to help achieve that goal.”*

*“America’s electric co-ops are grateful to U.S. Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.) and Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) for their leadership in sponsoring the Surface Transportation Board (STB) Re-authorization Act of 2015,” said **Jeffrey Connor, interim CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.** “We hope that President Obama will quickly sign the bill into law. This legislation will modernize the STB and provide for many reforms that rail dependent shippers have long been advocating.”*

*“S. 808 will initiate a dialog between partners from field to end user,” said **John Horter, president of the South Dakota Soybean Association.** “Hopefully, each segment of the industry will use this dialog to learn from their past and work together to develop a more prosperous future for all industry shareholders and the general public.”*

*“Olin is a captive shipper served by only one railroad at each of its ten U.S. Chlor Alkali production facilities,” said **Joe Rupp, CEO of Olin.** “Over the past decade, this lack of rail competition has contributed to dramatic rate increases and declining service quality. Olin congratulates Senator John Thune and Congressman Bill Shuster on passage of the Surface Transportation Board Reform bill (S. 808), which is designed to help address these important issues. This legislation represents the most significant rail reform since enactment of the Staggers Act in 1980. The legislation is a positive and much needed first step to improve the STB and its accountability to the shipper community. Olin looks forward to continuing to work with the railroads and the STB to create a more equitable freight rail system.”*

*The **USA Dry Pea & Lentil Council** supports the passage of S. 808, The Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization Act of 2015. The bill would help ensure that pulse shippers receive fair treatment from the railroads by implementing efficient rate review mechanisms, simplifying the arbitration process, and encouraging rail industry investments to improve service. Because rail service is a key link in moving our products into both domestic and international markets, we see this legislation as an important step in keeping our industry competitive in the global pulse trade.*