

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2005

The Honorable Jim Nussle
Chairman
Committee on the Budget
309 CHOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Nussle:

We are writing to express our opposition to language in the fiscal year 2006 budget resolution that would cut Amtrak's annual funding. While we share your desire to develop a fiscally responsible budget blueprint, we believe the President's proposed zeroing-out of funding for Amtrak would be a dangerous step backwards in our efforts to improve the efficiency of passenger rail.

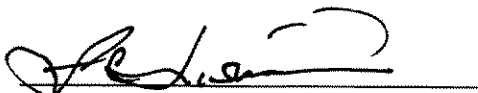
Amtrak's 5-year Strategic Plan, which was approved by its Board of Directors on June 10, 2004, specifies that approximately \$1.8 billion will be required for fiscal year 2006. Last year, the President sought \$900 million for Amtrak in fiscal year 2005 and budgeted \$1.4 billion for each year thereafter. According to a recent report by the Congressional Research Service, both the now defunct Amtrak Reform Council and the DOT-IG acknowledge the need for at least \$1.5 billion in capital and operating support. Seeking no funds for direct Amtrak expenses and ceding control of the railroad to a bankruptcy trustee, whose legal responsibility is to Amtrak's creditors, represents a drastic and unrealistic turnaround in the Administration's policy.

The government directly or indirectly subsidizes all transportation in the United States, and rail gets the least support. Unlike aviation, highways, and transit, there is no dedicated fund for investing in passenger rail development. These other modes all operate on predominantly federally owned or federally assisted infrastructure, and rely on government-supported security, research, and traffic controllers. While we are willing to listen to new proposals for reforming passenger rail, we are concerned over the implications of a budget resolution that would cut Amtrak's operating subsidies and effectively strand millions of passengers.

For this reason, we ask that you provide sufficient funding in the fiscal year 2006 Budget Resolution to sustain Amtrak's national network of passenger rail service. The company is headed in the right direction and it is our duty to continue to provide Americans with effective and environmentally friendly transportation options.

Please consider our request for adequate funding for Amtrak in preparing the Budget Resolution. Feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

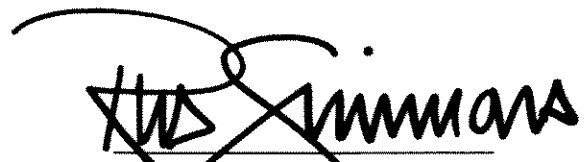



Rep. Steve LaTourette (OH-14)
Chairman Subcommittee on Railroads




Rep. Mike Castle (DE-A/L)


Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (NY-24)

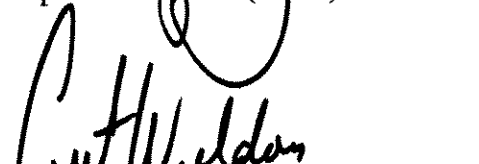
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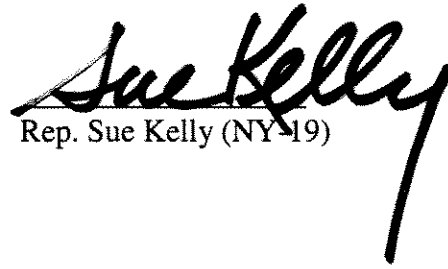

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