

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. RES. 356

Expressing support for the designation of the week of September 18 through September 24, 2023, as “Rail Safety Week” in the United States and supporting the goals and ideals of Rail Safety Week to reduce highway-rail grade crossing and trespasser-related incidents, fatalities, and injuries, reduce derailments, improve the safe transportation of hazardous materials by rail, and prevent rail worker fatalities.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

SEPTEMBER 21, 2023

Ms. CANTWELL (for herself, Mr. VANCE, Mr. BROWN, Mr. CASEY, and Mr. FETTERMAN) submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

RESOLUTION

Expressing support for the designation of the week of September 18 through September 24, 2023, as “Rail Safety Week” in the United States and supporting the goals and ideals of Rail Safety Week to reduce highway-rail grade crossing and trespasser-related incidents, fatalities, and injuries, reduce derailments, improve the safe transportation of hazardous materials by rail, and prevent rail worker fatalities.

Whereas the first Rail Safety Week was held from September 24 through September 30, 2017, by the national education safety nonprofit organization Operation Lifesaver,

the Department of Transportation, and other organizations;

Whereas Rail Safety Week was launched to raise awareness about the need for increased education on how to be safe around highway-rail grade crossings and railroad tracks and to highlight efforts to further reduce collisions, injuries, and fatalities;

Whereas highway-rail grade crossing and trespassing incidents constituted approximately 94 percent of all rail-related fatalities during 2022;

Whereas, under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Public Law 117–58; 135 Stat. 429), Congress provided \$3,000,000,000 during a 5-year period for the Railroad Crossing Elimination grant program to help local communities construct highway-rail grade separation projects to eliminate crossings;

Whereas, in 2022, 50 percent of all highway-rail grade crossing collisions and 64 percent of all fatal highway-rail grade crossing collisions occurred at gated highway-rail grade crossings;

Whereas preliminary Federal statistics indicate that 2,197 highway-grade crossing collisions occurred in the United States in 2022, resulting in 274 deaths and another 812 individuals being injured;

Whereas many collisions between trains and motor vehicles or pedestrians could have been prevented by increased education, engineering, and enforcement;

Whereas Operation Lifesaver, the foremost nonprofit organization with respect to rail safety, administers a public education program about grade-crossing safety and trespassing prevention;

Whereas, during Rail Safety Week, from September 18 through 24, 2023, and throughout the year, everyone is encouraged to take added caution as motorists or pedestrians approach tracks or trains;

Whereas the February 3, 2023, Norfolk Southern train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, which resulted in the burning of 6 vinyl chloride tank cars and forced the evacuation of approximately 2,000 nearby residents, was a reminder of the risks posed by hazardous materials transportation;

Whereas preliminary 2022 Federal statistics indicate that—

(1) Class I freight railroads had the highest derailment rate in the past decade;

(2) the number of derailments per 1,000,000 miles traveled among Class I freight railroads has increased by 14 percent since 2012; and

(3) more than 43,000 rail workers have been injured and 135 rail workers have been killed on duty since 2012;

Whereas the United States, Canada, and Mexico will concurrently observe Rail Safety Week; and

Whereas this important observance should lead to greater safety awareness and a reduction in highway-rail grade crossing collisions, derailments, rail worker fatalities, and other railroad incidents: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved*, That the Senate—

2 (1) supports the designation of “Rail Safety
3 Week”;

4 (2) expresses strong support for—

1 (A) the goals and ideals of Rail Safety
2 Week;

3 (B) efforts to reduce highway-rail grade
4 crossing and trespasser-related incidents, fatali-
5 ties, and injuries;

6 (C) efforts by the Federal Railroad Admin-
7 istration to improve safety cultures at Class I
8 freight railroads;

9 (D) efforts by the National Transportation
10 Safety Board to investigate the February 3,
11 2023, Norfolk Southern derailment in East Pal-
12 estine, Ohio, and the safety culture at Norfolk
13 Southern;

14 (E) the residents of East Palestine, Ohio,
15 Western Pennsylvania, and all other commu-
16 nities impacted by the derailment and release of
17 hazardous materials on February 3, 2023;

18 (F) the brave actions of first responders
19 who combat releases of hazardous materials
20 across the United States, including the brave
21 actions of the more than 300 firefighters from
22 50 fire departments who responded to the Feb-
23 ruary 3, 2023, derailment in East Palestine,
24 Ohio; and

1 (G) rail workers who have died or been in-
2 jured while working to keep people and goods
3 moving throughout the United States and the
4 families of those rail workers; and

5 (3) encourages the people of the United
6 States—

7 (A) to participate in Rail Safety Week
8 events and activities;

9 (B) to educate themselves and others on
10 how to be safe around railroad tracks; and

11 (C) to support efforts to improve the safe
12 transportation of hazardous material by rail.

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