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COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
DEMOCRATIC POLICY COMMITTEE

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4904

June 23, 2005

Ronald D. Leonhardt
City Clerk
City of Milwaukee
200 E Wells St Rm 205
Milwaukee, WI 53202-3515

Dear Ronald,

Thank you for contacting me to express your support for continued federal funding for Amtrak. I appreciate hearing from you. As you and many other Wisconsinites have noted, trains are an essential means by which Americans travel for business and pleasure, and I agree with you that Amtrak should be adequately funded.

You may be interested to know that on March 8, 2005, I sent a letter to the Chairman and Ranking Member of Senate Budget Committee requesting that they reject the President's proposal to eliminate funding for Amtrak and provide adequate funding for Amtrak in the fiscal year 2006 budget resolution. I have enclosed a copy of this letter for your information.

As you may know, the Senate passed S.Con.Res. 18, its version of the fiscal year 2006 budget resolution, on March 17, 2005, by a vote of 51-49. During consideration of the budget, I supported an amendment by Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) to provide \$1.4 billion for Amtrak. Unfortunately, the Senate rejected this amendment by a vote of 46-52. The final version of the budget resolution, H.Con.Res. 95, also did not include funding for Amtrak. I will continue to support adequate funding for Amtrak as the fiscal year 2006 budget and appropriations process continues.

Thanks again for contacting me. It is important to me that the people of Wisconsin keep me informed of their concerns. I look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Sincerely,



Russell D. Feingold
United States Senator

Enclosure

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March 8, 2005

The Honorable Judd Gregg
Chairman
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kent Conrad
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on the Budget
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Gregg and Senator Conrad:

As the Senate Budget Committee considers the Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Resolution, I strongly urge you to reject the President's proposal in his 2006 budget to eliminate funding for Amtrak. Amtrak provides vital services to Wisconsin and the rest of the nation that might be shut down without such funds. The President's plan would likely lead to bankruptcy of Amtrak and interrupt service to millions of riders and thousands of communities nationwide.

With a new Amtrak station at Mitchell International Airport and routes like the Hiawatha Service between Chicago and Milwaukee and the Empire Builder, which stops in Milwaukee and other Wisconsin cities on the way to the Pacific Northwest from Chicago, Amtrak provides vital links between Wisconsin communities. With congestion on our roadways and at our airports increasing, a potential stoppage of Amtrak service would be particularly ill-timed.

The President's apparent preference for a damaging bankruptcy for Amtrak is particularly unfortunate given the progress Amtrak has been made to cut costs and increase service. Where Amtrak service is available, ridership is increasing, with Amtrak carrying more than 25 million passengers nationwide. And, at the same time Amtrak is carrying more people and increasing the number of trains it operates by 20%, Amtrak CEO and President Peter Gunn has cut operating costs. Over the last 30 months, headcount has been reduced by nearly 5,000 to just under 20,000 employees.

While Amtrak has made great strides to control its operating costs, there is an enormous amount of work needed on maintenance of infrastructure, cars and equipment that cannot be deferred indefinitely. Putting off this important work could begin to jeopardize the safety and reliability of Amtrak service for the millions of riders that depend on it.

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