



Tammy Baldwin

United States Senator for Wisconsin

www.baldwin.senate.gov

U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin Statement for the Record

Meeting of the Milwaukee Public Works Committee

April 29, 2015

I would like to begin by acknowledging the leadership of Chairman Bauman for calling today's hearing. I'd also like to thank the representatives from both the railroads and emergency management agencies who are in attendance. Finally, I appreciate all the work and advocacy done by Wisconsin's citizens to raise awareness of this issue. Many of you have shared your concerns about oil trains with me personally. I look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue that is so important to the safety of our communities.

As you all know, the danger facing Wisconsinites living near rail lines has materialized quickly. Just a few years ago an oil train in our state was a rare sight. Today, more than 40 trains a week pass through Wisconsin, and about ten travel through Milwaukee, our most densely populated urban area. In order to respond to this growing threat, open and honest communication between federal, state, and local governments; first responders; railroad carriers; shippers; and citizens; is essential.

At the federal level, I have introduced legislation to immediately halt the use of outdated and dangerous tank cars from being used to transport crude oil in the United States. That legislation, the 'Crude-by-Rail Safety Act,' would also require a federal stability standard for any oil traveling by rail in the country.

My legislation would require tank cars to have thermal protection and ensure that the crude oil being shipped has been properly stabilized. This will allow our first responders dramatically more time to put out a fire from a derailment. Oil shipped from the Bakken region in North Dakota is more volatile than other types of crude, making ignition during a derailment more likely. Volatile crude and outdated tank cars have too often combined to create a domino effect of explosions from car to car that has been the hallmark of recent derailments.

I have also sponsored legislation, the 'RESPONSE Act,' to establish a subcommittee at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) dedicated to establishing best practices and training methods to respond to oil train derailments. I stand ready to help first responders receive the equipment and resources they need to be prepared and my office is available to help achieve this goal.

Federal rules from the Department of Transportation on oil trains are due very soon, possibly even this week. While they are several months late, I am hopeful that the rules will be strong—requiring the strict tank car standards I have called for in letters to the agency and the White House.

While government action is needed, industry has a role to play as well. I'm pleased that CN and CP are here and I am hopeful that we can work together in a constructive manner to ensure the safety of our citizens. I would also like to take this opportunity to urge the railroads and the first responders in attendance to use this opportunity to set up systems by which to share information about oil trains quickly and securely. I would also like to offer my office as a resource to aid this collaboration in any way possible.

In closing, I would like to simply state that I share the frustrations of many of my constituents about oil trains. Without our consent or even notification, Wisconsin has become one of the busiest routes for dangerous oil train traffic in the nation. While we bear all the risks and endure the sleepless nights, most of the benefits of this boom are being felt beyond Wisconsin's borders. In fact, rail shippers in the state have been unable to get their goods to market because Wisconsin's rails are filled with oil trains. I have worked at the federal level to limit the dangers posed by these trains, and will continue to do so. I again thank Chairman Bauman for holding this important and timely meeting, and look forward to working with all of you to keep Wisconsin's communities safe.