



November 9, 2020

Cosponsor S. 4860, the Railroad Unemployment Equity and Fairness Act

Dear Senator:

We are writing to you to ask you to support the “Railroad Unemployment Equity and Fairness Act (“REEF Act”), S. 4860, sponsored by Senator Rob Portman (R-OH) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN).

The REEF Act ends the unfair sequestration of Railroad Retirement Sickness and Unemployment benefits for railroad workers who become unemployed or sick on the job. Unlike traditional state unemployment insurance benefits, the Railroad Retirement Board’s unemployment insurance benefits are subjected to sequester as a result of the Budget Control Act of 2011. Without a legislative fix, railroaders and their families will continue to be unjustly shortchanged and face a 5.7% reduction to their benefits.

It is important to remember that these sickness and unemployment benefits are funded by railroad employers. No part of these contributions are made up of taxpayer funds or government subsidies and there is no harm to taxpayers by ending the sequester on the benefits. The only reason the RRB UI funds are sequestered currently is the lack of a distinction between Railroad Retirement benefits and other tax-subsidized benefits in federal budgeting rules. This is a 9-year-old mistake that is long overdue for correction and, in the context of the COVID pandemic, the urgency to correct the mistake has been put into stark perspective. The REEF Act would remedy that for railroad workers, including those who have lost their jobs, have been sickened by COVID-19, or are caring for sick family members.

We urge you to cosponsor this legislation and support its passage this Congress. Thank you for your attention to this vital relief for America’s railroad workers.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dennis Pierce'.

Dennis Pierce
President
International Brotherhood of Teamsters Rail Conference

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larry I. Willis'.

Larry I. Willis
President
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO