



Extension of Remarks

Representative Thomas E. Petri

September 18, 2014

To allow railroad employees to remain on duty as necessary to clear a blockage of vehicular traffic at grade crossings.

Mr. Speaker, today, along with Representative Sensenbrenner and Representative Duffy, I am introducing common sense legislation that would provide flexibility for train crews to remain on duty past their maximum hours of service, when feasible to the extent necessary, in order to clear a blockage of vehicular traffic at grade crossings.

My district and the state of Wisconsin have seen a surge in traffic on our rail lines. This is great, but it has also caused a logjam of trains waiting on rail lines and blocking crossings, sometimes for hours on end. It was reported that last week near the small community of Byron in my district, a train blocked a state highway for five hours and could not move the fifty feet to clear the crossing because the crew had reached its maximum hours of service. A new crew was required before the train could be moved.

I recognize that the rail system is very complex and there are many factors that go into trains being held and crossings being blocked. But I still struggle with the fact that motorists, including emergency services, were forced to wait five hours for a train to move fifty feet. Part of the benefit in moving goods by rail is to relieve congestion on the roads, not increase it. The goal of this legislation is to provide a common sense solution to scenarios such as the instance in Byron.

While I realize these are the waning days of the 113th Congress, I hope that by at least introducing this legislation now, it will continue a discussion here in Congress and with the rail industry and rail labor on this common sense solution.