

TEAMSTERS RAIL CONFERENCE ENDORSES VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS FOR PRESIDENT

The 70,000-member Teamsters Rail Conference represents locomotive engineers, trainmen, and maintenance-of-way workers on all major freight railroads in the United States, Amtrak, and many of the nation's commuter rail systems and short lines.

WASHINGTON – Today the 70,000-member Teamsters Rail Conference, representing rail workers across the country who keep trains moving and maintain U.S. rails and railroad infrastructure, announced its support for Vice President Kamala Harris and her running mate Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz as the next President and Vice President of the United States.

The lives and livelihoods of railroaders are more dependent than most workers on decisions made by the federal government.

The Teamsters Rail Conference and its affiliated unions, The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET) and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division (BMWED), compared the records of the Trump years and the Biden/Harris administration in 14 areas of importance to railroaders:

- Crew size regulations
- Automated track inspections (ATI)
- Paid sick leave
- Precision Scheduled Railroading (PSR) issues addressed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Surface Transportation Board (STB)
- White House access to discuss issues of critical importance
- Waivers granted to the carriers by FRA
- Passenger rail funding, including Amtrak
- High speed rail funding
- National Mediation Board (NMB) funding and appointments
- Railroad Retirement Board funding and appointments
- C3RS close call reporting participation by the Class 1 freight railroads
- Actions by the Secretary of Transportation
- Actions by the FRA Administrator
- Actions by the Secretary of Labor

When comparing the records of the candidates it is obvious why railroaders should favor Vice President Harris when they cast their ballots. Some facts are already known. For example, Former President Donald Trump's administration let the major railroads "self-regulate" in ways not seen for a century. Waivers were routinely granted for exceptions to safety rules, including using the testing of Automated Track Inspection (ATI) as an excuse to suspend federal safety regulations.

The Trump administration looked the other way when it came to the use of a business model called Precision Scheduled Railroading or PSR. Under the PSR model, railroads began running extremely long trains with fewer inspections, reduced maintenance, and fewer workers on the job. PSR directly led to the derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, last year and has been linked to other safety lapses.

Now, Trump is on the campaign trail saying that for any one new regulation he wants to remove ten. In railroading it is said that “regulations are written in blood.” Reducing safeguards will likely lead to more derailments and more fatalities.

In clear contrast, the FRA under the Biden/Harris administration earlier this year created a two-person train rule. The Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) is addressing issues like rules for remotely operated trains and train length. Under Trump’s appointment to the FRA these RSAC meetings were eliminated silencing the voice of rail labor. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, over the opposition of railroad executives and the railroads’ trade association, has been pushing the Class I railroads to adopt a C3RS close-call reporting system similar to what’s used by commercial airlines to collect data and make railroads safer. A C3RS pilot project is now underway with the support of BLET at Norfolk Southern Railway.

The starkest differences can be found in passenger rail. Expansion of passenger service has been at the forefront of the Biden/Harris administration with construction projects funded that will create jobs for our members as well as make rail service faster and more efficient. Amtrak faced elimination under the Trump administration.

In addition to comparing the records of the two administrations on rail issues, the Teamster Rail Conference knows that Vice President Harris cast the tie-breaking vote for the American Rescue Plan that saved the pensions of a half-million of our fellow Teamsters.

Additionally, Vice President Harris along with former Labor Secretary Marty Walsh chaired a White House Task Force on Worker Empowerment and Organizing. Under the Biden/Harris administration the Teamster Rail Conference has had greater access to the administration officials than ever before. One example is the rail summit that was hosted by top officials in the administration that was attended by all executive members of both BLET and BMWED at the White House.

For more information on the Teamsters Rail Conference and its affiliated unions, please visit: <https://teamster.org/divisions/rail-conference/>