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November 8, 2022

Hon. Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Hon. Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Hon. Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, and Leader McCarthy,

The National Waste & Recycling Association (NWRA) urges Congress to act before November 19 to prevent what would be an economically devastating rail strike that could also lead to a public health crisis if waste and recyclables that are transported by rail to recycling facilities and landfills are unable to be moved.

NWRA is the voice for the private-sector waste and recycling industry. Our members collect residential, commercial, industrial, and medical waste. Our services are vital to protect public health and, in certain areas of the country, we are heavily reliant upon rail transportation.

While most of the country only began focusing on railway issues in mid-September, NWRA's members were already beginning to feel the effects across the U.S. as early as the spring. Member companies from the Northeast to the Northwest began noticing significant rail service disruptions that were having a dramatic impact on their businesses.

In Boston, NWRA members were unable to load rail cars due to ongoing service issues involving their delivery. In the meantime, railcars that were loaded with waste ended up waiting a significant period of time to be moved out by the railroad companies. Other members pointed out that rail operations were being negatively impacted due to the excessive backlog of cars waiting to switch at a particular railyard outside of Albany, N.Y.

Many other NWRA members had similar ongoing rail service-related issues including missed switches, extended transit times, unfilled car orders, and the inability to contact customer service and operating personnel at the railroads.

In Washington State, Snohomish County's Solid Waste Division has faced temporary closures of solid waste facilities this year due to ongoing regional railway transportation issues.

These problems, while significant, would appear miniscule compared to the impact of a strike or lockout. Waste and recyclables must continue to be able to be shipped via rail without disruption. The loss of this transportation mode, even for a short time, would result in the stockpiling of waste and recyclables in communities and could lead to a public health crisis. It should be noted that a substantial part of New York City's waste leaves by rail daily.

NWRA asks Congress to extend the current cooling off period that expires November 19 while the unions and rail companies continue to work towards a voluntary agreement. Should the parties be unable to reach agreement, Congress should be prepared to act under the authority granted to it by the Railway Labor Act to impose the Presidential Emergency Board's proposed resolution.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darrell K. Smith". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Darrell K. Smith, PhD
President and CEO

Cc: Members of the United States Senate and House of Representatives