

June 5, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned groups representing agricultural producers and agribusinesses respectfully request that you strongly consider nominating **Dr. Kendell W. Keith** as a member of the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB).

America's transportation infrastructure – and the motor carriers, barges and railroads that operate on it – is a critical element of U.S. agriculture's world-class productivity and competitiveness, which contribute substantially to U.S. job creation and economic growth. Farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses depend on these transportation providers to move agricultural products from geographically diverse sources of production to domestic and export markets, as well as to provide critical farm inputs such as fertilizer, seed and agricultural chemicals to producers. Freight railroads account for about 24 percent of agricultural commodity shipment volumes.

The STB serves a vital role, given its charge to provide fair, objective and fact-based regulatory oversight of a freight rail industry that is exempt from U.S. antitrust law and now consists of only seven major Class I railroads – with two dominant in the West and two in the East. The STB has long taken a balanced approach – as it is required to do under existing law – in weighing the need for effective free-market competition in the rail marketplace while allowing railroads to earn sufficient revenues to maintain their infrastructure and a national rail system. Under the STB Reauthorization Act, the STB was expanded to five members (from three previously), providing you the opportunity to name two new persons to serve.

Dr. Keith has a strong background in rail transportation policy issues and alternative dispute-resolution matters. For 32 years (1980-2012), he served on the staff of the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA), the last 25 years of which were spent as its president (1986-2012). NGFA is a broad-based trade association that consists of more than 1,000 member companies involved in grain handling, feed operations, commodity merchandising, processing and exporting; its member companies handle approximately 70 percent of the U.S. grain and oilseed crop. During his tenure, Dr. Keith led the NGFA's work on rail and waterway transportation policy, including rail contracting, competitive access, rail shuttle train programs and rail service issues. Since 2012, he has served as president of TRC Consulting, where he has advised corporate and association clients on government policy impacts on markets in commodities, transportation, biotechnology, risk management and biofuels.

An accomplished economist and analyst, Dr. Keith has conducted numerous studies on rail competition and rail investment. He testified numerous times before Congress and the STB, and was heavily involved in working with Congress in drafting portions of the Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act, which established the STB. He also spearheaded with the rail

industry and Association of American Railroads NGFA's development of a unique Rail Arbitration and Mediation Service, which has fostered dispute-resolution and closer communication between rail carriers and their customers. He also has a strong background and experience in real-world commercial market issues.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of Dr. Keith to serve in this important role at the STB.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Oilseed Processing Association  
National Pasta Association  
North American Millers' Association  
Pet Food Institute  
The Fertilizer Institute

California Grain and Feed Association  
Grain and Feed Association of Illinois  
Kansas Grain and Feed Association  
Michigan Agri-Business Association  
Minnesota Grain and Feed Association  
North Dakota Grain Dealers Association  
Ohio AgriBusiness Association  
Oklahoma Grain and Feed Association  
South Dakota Grain and Feed Association  
Texas Grain and Feed Association  
Wisconsin Agri-Business Association

cc: Honorable Sen. Mitch McConnell, Senate Majority Leader

Honorable Sen. John Thune, Chairman, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

Honorable Sen. Deb Fischer, Chairman, Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine Infrastructure, Safety and Security;  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation