



U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Washington, DC 20515

Don Young
Chairman

James L. Oberstar
Ranking Democratic Member

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The Honorable Edward Fitzmaurice
Chairman
National Mediation Board
1301 K Street, N.W., Suite 250-E
Washington, D.C. 20572

Dear Chairman Fitzmaurice:

I am writing to urge you to accept the International Association of Machinists' (IAM) request for a proffer of arbitration in its negotiations with the nation's railroads. I understand that contract negotiations between the IAM and the National Carrier's Contract Committee (NCCC), the negotiating arm for the Class I carriers, have been going on for more than four years and that productive meetings have not taken place between the parties in several months. After nearly four years of negotiations, it is evident that the parties are hopelessly divided and further negotiations would be fruitless. Moreover, I am aware that 97 percent of the IAM membership voted to reject the railroads' last and final offer. Clearly, management's offer is far from acceptable to the rank and file.

The Railway Labor Act provides for a process that anticipates situations like these where an impasse clearly exists between labor and management. A proffer of arbitration, the next step in the process, would move negotiations forward and would bring the parties one step closer to an agreement without a disruption of essential rail services.

The Railway Labor Act can foster consensual agreements, but only when it is administered properly. I am asking you to reconsider the IAM's request for a proffer of arbitration and do all in your power to facilitate a resolution to the protracted negotiations.

Sincerely,


James L. Oberstar
Ranking Democratic Member

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