



A bold voice for transportation workers

March 1, 2013

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall II
Ranking Member
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Rahall:

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), I would like to express our strong support for the Invest in American Jobs Act of 2013 and thank you for your leadership on this critical issue. By creating strong Buy America standards, this important legislation will ensure that investments in our nation's transportation infrastructure will grow and sustain domestic manufacturing and the millions of jobs the sector supports.

A strong transportation system and a strong manufacturing sector are intrinsically linked. Particularly at a time when our economy continues to struggle and unemployment remains high, it is sound economic policy to make substantial investments in our nation's infrastructure. Repairing our deteriorating transit, aviation, highway, bridge, rail and port and maritime systems will help put millions to work while improving a national infrastructure system that the World Economic Forum recently ranked an embarrassing 25th best in the world in overall quality. To maximize the impact of these investments, it makes sense that we use American-made steel, iron and manufactured goods. This will not only increase the number of jobs created by federal investments in infrastructure, but will also ensure that we have a robust manufacturing sector able to supply the products needed by private and public transportation employers.

Existing Buy America requirements are specific to each agency, creating a myriad of policies that are inconsistently applied to various modes of transportation. These policies too often include broadly applied waiver provisions that lack accountability and decrease the effectiveness of Buy America requirements and the economic impact of federal investment. While the current Department of Transportation (DOT) leadership has done an excellent job of emphasizing domestic procurement and enforcing Buy America laws, the limitations of the existing laws have become more apparent. Without better legislation on the books, the executive branch can only do so much to improve our transportation procurement process. The Invest in American Jobs Act addresses these deficiencies by strengthening, harmonizing and appropriately expanding existing Buy America provisions.

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Edward Wytkind, President / Larry I. Willis, Secretary-Treasurer



Specifically, the bill strengthens the waiver provisions to ensure that they are awarded only when truly warranted and with full transparency. It requires Federal agencies to post any proposed waiver online, provide a detailed justification for the waiver, and offer the American public an opportunity to comment prior to taking effect. Agencies will also be required to publish annual reports that provide justifications for waivers issued, compare the amount of funds used on both domestic and foreign manufactured goods, and provide an employment impact analysis of the cumulative effect of waivers issued in the previous year. Annual reports will make the Buy America waiver process more accountable, and help identify areas where we can strengthen our domestic manufacturing sector. The bill also creates a process for the review of all nationwide waivers to determine if they are still warranted.

The Invest in American Jobs Act builds on language signed into law last year as part of the MAP-21 surface transportation reauthorization, which prevented state and local governments from segmenting highway projects that receive federal funds in order to bypass Buy America requirements. This bill would apply that principle to transit projects and rolling stock procurements, preventing segmentation in this important area of transportation procurement, and ensuring that federal dollars are spent to support good-paying American jobs.

Finally, this bill expands these strong Buy America requirements to other federal investment programs, including rail infrastructure grants, loans, and loan guarantees, Clean Water State Revolving Fund grants, Federal Emergency Management Agency grants, Truman-Hobbs bridge alteration grants, and Economic Development Administration Grants. By applying Buy America to all transportation agencies and expanding the reach of these laws to other federal investment programs, this bill removes the ambiguity of having agency-specific requirements, and creates a clear and consistent Buy America law for federal investment in transportation.

The American people need a commitment from their government that U.S. federal investments will create the greatest possible economic impact and support U.S. job growth. The Invest in American Jobs Act is a recognition of that commitment, and ensures that expenditures on transportation projects will be used to purchase U.S.-made materials, manufactured goods, and equipment, create American jobs, and help rebuild our domestic manufacturing sector. Thank you again for introducing this important, job-creating legislation, and for your efforts on behalf of American workers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edward Wytkind', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Edward Wytkind
President