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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 17, 1991

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RAIL STRIKE

RAILROAD WORKERS MAY BE ON STRIKE TODAY, BUT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CAN'T AFFORD TO HAVE CONGRESS GO ON STRIKE TOO, IN THE FACE OF A NATIONAL EMERGENCY.

AS THE BUDGET NEGOTIATIONS MADE CLEAR LAST YEAR WITH THE THREATENED SHUTDOWN OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THIS GREAT BODY HAS A HABIT OF POSTPONING TOUGH DECISIONS AND TOUGH VOTES UNTIL A REAL EMERGENCY EXISTS.

WELL, THE RAIL INDUSTRY HAS NOW SHUTDOWN, AND WE WILL VERY SOON SEE THE SHUTDOWN OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY IF WE DON'T ACT NOW.

FOR OVER THREE YEARS, THE ADMINISTRATION, THE CARRIERS AND THE UNIONS HAVE BEEN WORKING TO AVOID WHAT HAS NOW HAPPENED: A NATIONWIDE RAILSTRIKE THAT THREATENS THE PRECARIOUS ECONOMIC RECOVERY WE HAVE EMBARKED UPON AND THE LIVELIHOOD OF LITERALLY MILLIONS OF WORKERS WHOSE JOBS ARE DEPENDENT UPON THE EFFICIENT TRANSPORT OF PARTS AND FINISHED PRODUCTS.

DIRE CONSEQUENCES OF RAIL STRIKE

TO SAY THAT THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF THIS STRIKE ARE DIRE FOR ALL AMERICANS -- IS NO UNDERSTATEMENT.

OUR AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY -- ALREADY SUFFERING FROM CONSUMER CUTBACKS -- WILL BE FORCED TO SHUT DOWN. FORD HAS SAID IT WILL BEGIN IDLING WORKERS WITHIN 48 HOURS AND CHRYSLER HAS SAID IT WILL TOTALLY SHUT DOWN IN THREE DAYS. I DON'T NEED TO REMIND MEMBERS THAT THIS IS IN AN INDUSTRY THAT IS ALREADY REELING FROM AN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE THAT CURRENTLY HOVERS AROUND 17 PERCENT.

OTHER INDUSTRIES THAT WILL BE DRAMATICALLY AFFECTED BY THE STRIKE INCLUDE NON-RAILROAD EMPLOYEES AT FREIGHT WAREHOUSING AND TRANSFER POINTS, THE WOOD PRODUCTS INDUSTRY, AND THE COAL MINING INDUSTRY.

KANSAS IMPACT

AND OF COURSE, THE AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY -- WHICH IS OF PARTICULAR CONCERN TO THIS SENATOR FROM KANSAS -- WILL ALSO BE HIT HARD. I'VE BEEN HEARING FROM LOTS OF AGRICULTURE BUSINESSES WHO HAVE INDICATED THE DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES TO THEIR INDUSTRY WHICH IN MANY CASES IS ALREADY SUFFERING FROM HISTORICALLY LOW PRICES.

INDEED, THIS IS THE TIME OF YEAR WHEN FERTILIZER IS SHIPPED FOR SPRING PLANTING. OBVIOUSLY, ANY PROLONGED INTERRUPTION OF RAIL SERVICE WILL IMPEDE THE EFFORTS OF FARMERS TO GET THEIR CROPS PLANTED. THE RESULT OF ALL THIS SPELLS EXTREME HARDSHIP FOR THE AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY AND ULTIMATELY HIGHER PRICES FOR CONSUMERS.

AND FINALLY LET'S NOT FORGET THE IMPACT THAT THIS RAIL STRIKE IS HAVING ON THOUSANDS OF COMMUTERS WHO DEPEND ON RAIL SERVICE TO GET TO THEIR JOBS.

IMMEDIATE ACTION MUST BE TAKEN

I THINK EVERYONE AGREES THAT LABOR DISPUTES ARE BEST HANDLED IF THE PARTIES ARE ABLE TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES ON THEIR OWN THROUGH THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROCESS.

BUT THIS PROCESS HAS REACHED A STALEMATE WITH EIGHT OF THE ELEVEN INVOLVED UNIONS UNABLE TO REACH AGREEMENT.

THE PRESIDENTIAL EMERGENCY BOARD OFFERED ITS REPORT IN JANUARY AND ALL COOLING OFF PERIODS HAVE NOW EXPIRED.

THE TIME HAS NOW COME FOR CONGRESS TO ACT BASED ON THAT REPORT. WHILE I CAN'T SAY I AGREE WITH EVERYTHING IN IT, I BELIEVE IT IS BALANCED AND AS SECRETARY SKINNER HAS SAID, SHOULD FORM THE NUCLEUS FOR ANY CONGRESSIONAL SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE.

I KNOW THAT THE ADMINISTRATION HAS BEEN WORKING AROUND-THE-CLOCK TO AVERT THE DISASTER WE NOW HAVE ON OUR HANDS. IT IS NOW TIME FOR CONGRESS -- REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS -- TO STEP UP TO THE PLATE AND WORK WITH ADMINISTRATION TO END THIS RAIL STRIKE NOW.

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