



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**To:** House Committee on Energy and Environment  
**Fr:** Rep. Barbara Smith Warner  
**Re:** Support for HJM 201

**Date:** February 11, 2014

Chair Bailey and Member of the House Committee on Energy and Environment:

For the record my name is Barbara Smith Warner—State Representative from House District 45 which covers portions of Northeast Portland, Maywood Park and Parkrose. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HJM 201.

This bill asks Congress to strengthen safety standards for new and existing tank cars used to transport crude oil by rail. You've probably seen recent media coverage of accidents involving freight trains that were carrying crude oil, including the horrific event last July when a train derailed outside a small town in the province of Quebec, killing 47 people and destroying 30 buildings. As guardians of our state's public safety, we cannot stand idly by and wait for such a loss of life and community here in Oregon.

As the domestic oil industry has outpaced pipeline development in the United States, oil companies increasingly rely on freight rail lines to move their product to market. Historically, railroads are a safe method of ground freight transportation. However, many cars used to transport crude oil are older, and do not have to meet the same safety standards as cars used to transport other hazardous materials. Of the roughly 92,000 tank cars today used to move flammable liquids including crude and ethanol, only about 14,000—15 percent—are built to the latest industry safety standards.

In the past year, trains carrying crude oil have derailed in Alabama, North Dakota and Mississippi, spilling over a million gallons of oil in the United States. In fact, the year 2013 saw more oil spilled in derailments than in the last 37 years combined.<sup>i</sup>

The need for safety upgrades—including increased puncture resistance to decrease the risk of deadly explosions and fires should a derailment occur—is both well documented and widely agreed upon.<sup>ii</sup> Today I offer a Dash One (-1) Amendment, which not only strengthens the memorial by adding specificity, it brings additional key stakeholders to the table, including Oregon-based rail car companies. We expect no opposition to the bill.

I'll close with this: In 2011, a log train derailed outside Scappoose. It hit a tanker filled with ethanol, starting a fire that burned so hot firefighters were forced to pull back a half-mile. Those firefighters were quoted in the *Oregonian* saying they, "got lucky," because the accident didn't happen near homes or near drinking water. The previous year, about 7.7 million barrels of North Dakota crude traveled along those same rails on similar tank cars, right through a number of small communities along Highway 30.<sup>iii</sup> If we fail to take action, next time, we may not be so lucky.

I thank you again for the opportunity to bring this issue before you, and urge your support for HJM 201 and the -1 Amendment. Let's send a strong message to Congress that now is the time to act for the health and safety of our families and communities.

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<sup>i</sup> From 1975 to 2012 800,000 gallons of crude oil were spilled. However, in 2013, 1.15 million gallons were spilled—not including the Casselton, ND spill in December 2013 which spilled 400,000 gallons.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.aar.org/safety/Documents/Railroad%20Tank%20Cars.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> [http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2014/01/for\\_oil\\_trains\\_crossing\\_oregon.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2014/01/for_oil_trains_crossing_oregon.html)