



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**To:** Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
**Fr:** Rep. Barbara Smith Warner  
**Re:** Support for HJM 201-A

**Date:** February 19, 2014

**Chair Dembrow and members of the Committee:**

For the record my name is Barbara Smith Warner—State Representative from House District 45 which, as the Chair well knows, covers portions of Northeast Portland, Maywood Park and Parkrose. I testify today in support of House Joint Memorial 201-A, which was passed out of the House with an overwhelming majority in support on February 13<sup>th</sup>. HJM 201-A urges Congress to strengthen safety standards for new and existing tank cars used to transport crude oil by rail.

There are three reasons we should act now by passing this memorial:

- 1) Because more crude oil is now travelling by rail than ever before, and the cars in which that crude travels are outdated and unsafe;
- 2) Because the combination of these two factors is resulting in an increase in spills of crude oil; and
- 3) Because the results of these spills are devastating to communities and families.

Domestic oil companies are increasingly relying on freight rail lines to move their product to market. And, historically, railroads are a safe method of ground freight transportation. However, the vast majority of cars used today to transport crude are decades old, and do not have to meet the same safety standards as cars used to transport other hazardous materials.

In fact, of the roughly 92,000 tank cars used today to move flammable liquids like crude and ethanol, only about 14,000—**only 15 percent**—are built to the latest industry safety standards.

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

Last July, a train derailed outside a small town in the province of Quebec, killing 47 people. As you can see from the railway map I've made available in OLIS, these tracks run the length and width of Oregon. Imagine for a moment such a horrific event happening in your home town. As my esteemed co-chief sponsor the Speaker testified in committee, envision the catastrophic loss of life if this were to occur in North Portland.

Fortunately, the need for safety upgrades and for regulations that reflect the latest technology are both well documented and widely agreed upon.<sup>ii</sup> House Joint Memorial 201-A has broad stakeholder support, including from the railroad industry as well as Oregon-based rail car companies.

Colleagues, as guardians of our state's public safety, we cannot stand idly by and wait for a preventable tragedy to strike here in Oregon. HJM 201-A sends a message to Congress that now is the time to act for the health and safety of our families and communities. I urge your "aye" vote.

<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>