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JANUARY 4, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

I am signing into law H.R. 15223, the Transportation Safety Act of 1974. This bill will make revisions to laws concerning the transportation of hazardous materials, authorize funds for rail safety enforcement and research, and make the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) a completely independent agency.

This bill will expand the powers of the Department of Transportation to regulate the safe transportation of hazardous materials. While this expansion of powers goes against my general goal of reducing Federal regulation where possible, I recognize the problems that have existed in the past with the handling of hazardous materials. That concern has led me to approve the bill because of the significant dangers associated with handling these materials and the possible effects on people living near transportation facilities.

I remain committed, however, to the principle of maintaining the minimum possible Federal involvement in matters that are best handled by State, local or private authorities, and the elimination of unnecessary regulation. I am directing the Secretary of Transportation to implement this bill in such a way as to insure the public safety, while at the same time not putting any unnecessary burden or paperwork on our Nation's industry and trade. I think regulations on hazardous materials can be enforced in a way to meet both these objectives.

Travel in the United States will be safer because of Federal actions which will be taken under this new law. However, the Congress and the Executive also have the responsibility to ensure that expenditures of the taxpayer's dollars are kept to an absolute minimum and that only the most necessary new Federal programs are pursued. This requires the President and the Congress to carefully review the total Federal budget and not each item separately. H.R. 15223 requires NTSB to submit its budget and legislative recommendations directly to the Congress. This severely limits my ability to view these recommendations in the context of the overall budgets and their effect on the economy, in public borrowing, and other considerations.

Although I have signed H.R. 15223 into law because it will improve transportation safety, I will ask Congress to correct this unacceptable budget and legislative submission provision.

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