

JULY 9, 1976

Office of the White House Press Secretary

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NOTICE TO THE PRESS

The President has signed H. R. 11804--Federal Railroad Safety Authorization Act of 1976. This bill authorizes appropriations of \$35 million for each of fiscal years 1977 and 1978 to carry out rail safety programs; to establish safety standards for railroad employees; to place time limits on Department of Transportation proceedings; to require the Federal Railroad Administration to have at least 8 regional offices; to authorize an evaluation of railroad safety laws; and to increase penalties for violation of rail safety provisions.

H. R. 11804 authorizes appropriations of \$35 million for each of fiscal years 1977 and 1978 for the Department of Transportation to carry out the provisions of the Federal Railroad Safety Act of 1970.

H. R. 11804 will also continue the section in the current Act which places ceilings on the expenditure of funds for the major portions of Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) activities under the Rail Safety Act and would set an excessively high ceiling for the number of rail safety inspectors. In addition, the bill will continue to limit the amount that could be spent on rail safety research and development to no more than the amount spent on inspection and enforcement of the rail safety rules and regulations.

Section 4 of the bill will (a) establish maximum hours of service for crews of wreck or relief trains in emergency situations, (b) set standards for sleeping quarters for railroad employees, and (c) bring signalmen and hostlers (persons who move locomotives in yard and repair areas) within current limitations concerning employees' hours of duty.

Section 5 (a) of H. R. 11804 will require the Secretary of DOT to establish, within 180 days of enactment, procedures placing time limits upon all proceedings under this Act, with a maximum time limit of one year. Section 5 (b) will require the Secretary to issue regulations within 180 days of enactment regarding the visibility of rear cars of trains and preventing movement of trains onto tracks being repaired. Section 7 will authorize the congressional Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of rail safety laws to be completed within 18 months of enactment. Finally, the bill will raise the range of penalties for violations of rail safety provisions from 0-\$250 to \$250-\$2500.

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