

October 12, 2016

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Majority Leader:

The undersigned agricultural producer, commodity and agribusiness organizations write to respectfully urge you to recommend that President Obama renominate Ann D. Begeman to another five-year term as a Republican member of the Surface Transportation Board, and that her renomination be considered by the full Senate before her term expires at the end of this year. Commissioner Begeman possesses the background, experience and leadership essential to the Board as it continues to implement significant changes resulting from its most recent reauthorization in 2015.

Commissioner Begeman was sworn in as a member of the STB in May 2011, bringing with her two decades of extensive experience in transportation policy. She served as a senior aide on Capitol Hill for 21 years, during which she played a key role in crafting major transportation legislation, including the ICC Termination Act that created the STB. Immediately prior to joining the Board, she served as Republican Staff Director for the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. She also previously served as Acting Chief of Staff and Legislative Director for Sen. John McCain and as a legislative assistant to then-Sen. Larry Pressler of South Dakota.

During her tenure at the STB, Commissioner Begeman has served with great distinction and dedication. She served as the Board's Vice Chairman from May 2, 2011, to January 3, 2012; from January 4, 2013, to May 27, 2014; and from January 1, 2015, to January 7, 2016. She is extremely knowledgeable on the complexities and nuances of rail transportation policy. And we have found her to be a person of the highest integrity, as well as consistently fair, well-reasoned and insightful in her decisions and rulings as a member of the Board. As a person who grew up on a soybean farm in South Dakota, she also has first-hand knowledge about the importance of rail and overall transportation policy to our nation's farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses.

Commissioner Begeman currently is in her "holdover" year as a Board member, and her current term will expire on Dec. 31, 2016, unless she is renominated and reconfirmed. Given the very substantive agenda being shouldered by the STB in implementing the various provisions of the STB Reauthorization Act of 2015 – as well as its already extensive number of ongoing and pending proceedings – the nation can ill-afford to have a short-handed Board or to lose someone of Commissioner Begeman's integrity, expertise, institutional knowledge and sound judgment.

For these reasons, we respectfully encourage you to secure the President's renomination of Commissioner Begeman, and ask that you schedule a vote on her renomination to another five-year term before her current term expires at year's end. We greatly appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

National Grain and Feed Association
Agricultural Retailers Association
Agriculture Transportation Coalition
American Farm Bureau Federation
American Soybean Association
Corn Refiners Association
Institute of Shortening and Edible Oils
National Association of State Departments of Agriculture
National Association of Wheat Growers
National Barley Growers Association
National Cattleman's Beef Association
National Corn Growers Association
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives
National Farmers Union
National Milk Producers Federation
National Oilseed Processors Association
National Pasta Association
National Pork Producers Council
National Sunflower Association
North American Millers Association
Soy Transportation Coalition
The Fertilizer Institute
U.S. Canola Association
U.S. Poultry & Egg Association
USA Rice Federation