



RAILROAD COMMISSION OF TEXAS

Commissioner WAYNE CHRISTIAN

June 5, 2023

The Honorable John Cornyn
U.S. Senator
517 Hart Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
U.S. Senator
167 Russell Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Texas Oil & Natural Gas Concerns on S. 657 (The Railway Safety Act)

Senators Cornyn and Cruz:

I write to express concern with S.576, *the Railway Safety Act of 2023*, as recently reported out of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. I am troubled that this bill in its current form could be used to impede the transportation of reliable energy which is vital to Texans and our nation's economy.

I know you are both **passionate defenders** of Texas oil and gas production. As such, I hope this legislation can be clarified and narrowed in scope to avoid any unintended consequences it could present to our nation's fossil fuel production.

S.576 would direct the Biden administration to create new rules related to train length and operational restrictions on many trains carrying hazardous materials. It is my fear that, without greater clarity, the administration could easily use their authority to target the movement of energy products such as coal, oil, and natural gas. Moreover, various other mandates may affect railroad service that energy producers and their customers rely upon, such as the new crew-size mandate and the requirement to double the number of certain locomotive inspections.

As an elected Commissioner of the Railroad Commission of Texas (RRC), the state agency with primary regulatory jurisdiction over the oil and natural gas industry and coal mining operations, I am charged with not just the oversight of these industries but ensuring their economic vibrancy as well. Texas is the top crude oil- and natural gas-producing state in the nation, representing 43% of oil production and 25% of natural gas production¹. The industry roughly makes up 1/3 of our state's economy² and has contributed \$203 billion in taxes and royalties since 2007³, directly benefiting our state-funded programs. Texas oil and gas makes our state the best place to live, work and raise a family—and it needs to be defended.

¹ <https://www.eia.gov/state/print.php?sid=TX>

² <https://www.txoga.org/texas-oil-and-natural-gas-legislative-district-vital-statistics/>

³ <https://www.txoga.org/our-industry/economic-benefits/>



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As you know, oil and gas is so much more than fuel, and increased governmental regulations on fossil fuels increase their costs which spikes prices on everything else. For example, petroleum is necessary to produce about 96% of everyday consumer items like clothing, plastics, electronics, and more⁴. Natural gas costs can also impact fertilizer production costs by about 80%⁵ which has a resounding effect on the price of food. These unnecessary, increased costs are passed on to consumers who continue to struggle with record-high inflation and a stagnant economy.

Additional federal regulations on fossil fuels would only compound the headwinds many companies are already facing. I know you are quite familiar with the relentless legal attacks, added regulations and endless red tape that have increased costs to operate for many oil and gas companies. Industry has also been significantly impacted by Wall Street with the rise of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) investments, with ESG estimated to have decreased oil and gas investments by 90% from 2015 to 2021⁶.

Texans are lucky to have strong leaders such as yourselves fighting for them in Washington. I hope you and your Senate colleagues can add meaningful guardrails that shield our valuable resources from the radical environmentalists who want to shut down fossil fuels. There must be an alternative option that would improve railroad safety without risking higher energy costs on all Americans.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to Texas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne Christian".

Wayne Christian
Commissioner
Railroad Commission of Texas

⁴ <https://www.txoga.org/>

⁵ <https://www.fb.org/market-intel/too-many-to-count-factors-driving-fertilizer-prices-higher-and-higher>

⁶ <https://dailycaller.com/2022/06/15/utah-marlo-oaks-esg-tucker-carlson/>