



Supporting Organizations

Alliant Energy
American Chemistry
Basin Electric Power Cooperative
Bemidji Area Forestry Council
Blandin Paper Company
Dairyland Power Cooperative
East River Electric Power Cooperative
Freeborn-Mower Cooperative Services
Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
Great River Energy
Hibbing Area Chamber of Commerce
Lyon-Lincoln Electric Co-op
MN Association of Cooperatives
McNeilus Steel
Midwest Shippers' Association
Minnesota Crop Production Retailers
Minnesota Farmers Union
Minnesota Grain and Feed Association
Minnesota Forest Industries
Minnesota Power
Minnesota Rural Electric Association
Minnesota Soybean Growers Association
Minnesota Valley REC
Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association
Ottertail Power Company
People's Cooperative Services
Renville-Sibley Co-op
Tri-County Electric Cooperative

May 22, 2008

The Honorable James L. Oberstar
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

VIA FACSIMILE

Dear Representative Oberstar:

On behalf of Gopher CURE (Consumers United for Rail Equity), we write to oppose the nomination of Husein A. Cumber to succeed Douglas Buttrey on the Surface Transportation Board. Mr. Cumber, a son of immigrants from Pakistan and a graduate of Duke University might appeal to us for the diversity he brings to the STB. However, we are mindful that this candidate could have only been nominated had he first been vetted by the railroad oligarchs.

The STB's mission statement is "...dedicated to vigilant oversight and to rendering fair decisions expeditiously when regulation is required." We cite that high minded ideal to note that since 2000 the STB has ruled in favor of the monopolistic railroads 14 out of 15 cases for a remarkable 93% winning margin. We suspect that Mr. Cumber would continue to participate in the complicit arrangement between the STB and the railroads. We base our suspicion on the fact of Mr. Cumber's prior association with the Florida East Coast Railway, and note that the past two STB chairs, and senior staff, now have lucrative careers with the railroad industry.

Most telling is that no representative of captive shippers has been appointed to the STB or its predecessor agency since the Eisenhower Administration. We think it's time for consumers to be represented on the STB. The current gang has made American consumers pay dearly and doubly for diesel fuel costing them \$6.4 billion. This "vigilance" only stopped when Congress ordered the STB to order the rail industry (90 days later) to cease that practice, without ordering refunds.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our request. Your congressional clout has made a difference on legislation to reform rail. Stopping Mr. Cumber's nomination in favor of a candidate who hasn't already been likely scrutinized by the railroads is perhaps the best way to reform the STB's subservience to the railroads.

Sincerely,

Mark Glaess
Chairman