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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 5, 2009

Senator Klobuchar Praised for Vote to End Railroads' Antitrust Exemption

GopherCURE, a diverse coalition of Minnesota businesses working to increase competition and fairness in the freight rail industry, praised Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) today for supporting S. 146, the Railroad Antitrust Enforcement Act of 2009.

Klobuchar serves on the Senate Judiciary Committee which approved S. 146 today by a bipartisan 14-0 vote.

"We applaud Senator Klobuchar for supporting this important legislation to remove the railroads' antitrust exemption," said Amy Fredregill, chair of GopherCURE. "The railroads have used this exemption to consolidate the country's rail shipping down to four regional monopolies, giving these railroads tremendous monopoly pricing power that results in record profits at the expense of captive shippers."

Many Minnesota businesses are "captive shippers" because they have access to only one major railroad. As evidenced by GopherCURE's diverse membership, the issue affects a broad cross section of Minnesota industries that rely on rail for transporting goods such as coal, fertilizer, paper and grain.

"Putting the squeeze on captive shippers so these railroads can make higher and higher quarterly profits results in excessive prices for everything from electricity to food for American consumers," Fredregill added. "And they are doing this when most American families can least afford price increases on basic necessities."

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Klobuchar Praised
Add One

The Railroad Antitrust Enforcement Act of 2009, authored by Senator Herb Kohl (D-Wis.) would:

- Repeal the railroads' exemption from antitrust law;
- Permit the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to review mergers under antitrust law;
- Ensure that Surface Transportation Board rulings and regulations conform to the nation's antitrust laws; and
- Allow state attorneys general and private parties to sue for treble damages and pursue court orders to halt anticompetitive conduct, neither of which is currently allowed under federal law.

"Minnesotans are being hard hit by the increased costs experienced by captive rail shippers, and this bill will bring much-needed scrutiny to freight railroad consolidation and monopoly practices. The members of GopherCURE look forward to seeing this legislation finally brought to the floor of the House and Senate this year," Fredregill said.

A companion House bill (H.R. 233) authored by Rep. Tammy Baldwin (D-Wis.) is currently pending in the House Judiciary Committee. The legislation passed the committee in the last Congress by a bipartisan voice vote.

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GopherCURE is the Minnesota chapter of Consumers United for Rail Equity (CURE), a national organization representing a wide variety of rail customers including public utilities, rural electric co-ops, agriculture groups, as well as chemical, ethanol, cement, forest and paper companies, and other manufacturers.

For more information about CURE visit: www.railcure.org