



August 4, 2020

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chair
Dirksen Senate Office Building 512
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Hart Senate Office Building 420 A
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell,

The Rail Passengers Association is writing to voice our opposition to the re-nomination of Todd Rokita of Indiana to the Amtrak Board of Directors. Based upon his record, we believe Mr. Rokita is the wrong person to provide guidance to Amtrak in these difficult times and lacks a clearly defined vision of growth for America’s railroad.

During our organization’s research into Mr. Rokita’s tenure as a Member of Congress, we found that he voted against Amtrak in 8 of the 13 Amtrak-specific amendments we tracked. Some of Mr. Rokita’s most questionable anti-Amtrak votes include:

- 2017 – Voted YES on H.Amdt. 287 to H.R. 3354, filed by Rep. Mo Brooks, that would have eliminated funding to Amtrak’s National Network (the amendment failed).
- 2015 – Voted YES on H.Amdt. 72 to H.R. 749, filed by Rep. Tom McClintock, that would have completely ended federal grants for Amtrak (the amendment failed).
- 2011 – Voted YES on H.Amdt. 43 to H.R. 1, filed by Rep. Pete Sessions, would have reduced Amtrak’s capital grant by \$446 million (the amendment failed).

Most of the actions taken by Amtrak’s board members happen behind closed doors, with little public explanation of how or why board members voted on issues. Nevertheless, these actions have a big impact on the present and future of the U.S. passenger rail network—establishing new policies, providing corporate management and oversight, and helping decide major issues addressing who the railroad serves and what levels of service they receive.

Amtrak provides an essential service to hundreds of communities across the U.S., both urban and rural. Given his voting record in Congress, putting Mr. Rokita on the Amtrak board would be too great a risk.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Jim Mathews, President & CEO
Rail Passengers Association