



Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division

BMWED LEGISLATIVE ALERT

Byrd Amendment to Save Amtrak Funding Defeated in Senate

An effort spearheaded by Senate Democrats to save Amtrak's federal subsidy was defeated on Wednesday, March 16, when the Senate rejected an amendment to the budget resolution offered by Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) to restore \$1.4 billion for Amtrak in fiscal 2006. President Bush's budget, submitted in February, provides no funding for Amtrak.

Though the amendment failed 46-52, the real battle will come when appropriators draft the spending bill that covers Transportation Department programs. Amtrak will have to compete with all other programs in the bill.

Four Northeastern Republican senators – Lincoln Chaffee (RI), Arlen Specter (PA), Olympia Snowe (ME) and Susan Collins (ME) – joined Democrats in supporting the failed amendment. Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL) voted wrong, and Senators Jack Reed (D-RI) and Mark Pryor (D-AR) did not vote.

Prospects in the House could be more promising where 21 mostly Northeastern Republican members have signed on to a letter to the Budget Committee in support of restoring federal funding.

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