

Wyden blocks nomination to Transportation Board

WASHINGTON, DC – Citing lack of qualifications and Oregon’s CORP short-line rail dispute, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (D-OR) has made a procedural move to block the nomination of Hussein Cumber to the Surface Transportation Board.

The Surface Transportation Board is a three-person panel that makes decisions affecting the nation’s transportation policy.

“The president has nominated Mr. Cumber to work on a vital regulatory board with the capacity to impact our economy, our infrastructure, and the wages of hard-working Americans

across the nation,” Wyden said. “A seat on the Surface Transportation Board shouldn’t be a payoff. It’s not a prize to be won — it’s a job to be done.”

Cumber is a former fundraiser for both President George W. Bush and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush. His regulatory experience in transportation is limited to two short-term political appointments at the Department of Transportation.

Wyden has asked the Surface Transportation Board to intervene in the CORP short-line rail dispute in Oregon, where the owners of the line

have cut and reduced service while attempting to raise rates up to 300 percent and requesting that the state pay for rail maintenance.

“The Surface Transportation Board is the last line of defense against companies that are more interested in maximizing profits than they are in their legal obligations as a common carrier,” Wyden said.

Cumber has been described as a fundraising wunderkind. “One story noted that he ‘devours business cards like most mortals do potato chips,’ Wyden said. “Developing these political relationships, he said, allowed him to ‘meet some great people and there’s going to be a payoff in the end.’”

The law says that members of the Surface Transportation Board should possess professional standing and demonstrated knowledge in the fields of transportation or transportation regulation.

“I’m very concerned that Mr. Cumber doesn’t possess any of these qualities,” Wyden said. “(This) is a job to be done by someone armed with credentials and credibility, not by someone armed with only cash and connections.”

Cumber’s nomination requires confirmation by the U.S. Senate. However, president Bush has a history of

waiting for Congress to recess before appointing a nominee — especially a controversial one. Recess appointments don’t require Senate approval and are good for one year.

(Editor’s Note: The two other members of the Surface Transportation Board are Chairman Charles Nottingham and Vice Chairman Francis Mulvey. Nottingham is an attorney who spent four years with the Federal Highway Administration working on everything from funding analysis to policy development. He was the transportation commissioner of Virginia DOT and counsel to the Committee on Government Reform in the U.S. House of Representatives.

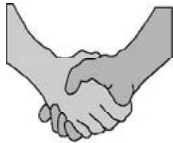
Mulvey holds a PhD in economics. He has legislative experience as staff director for the Railroad Subcommittee in the House of Representatives, and was deputy assistant inspector general for Rail, Transit, and Special Programs in the Department of Transportation and assistant director charged with analyzing transportation issues at the Government Accounting Office. Prior to that he was the programs manager for the National Academy of Sciences, Transportation Research Board and vice president for research with the American Bus Association.)



AFSCME’s Ken Allen re-elected IVP


Ken Allen has been re-elected as one of 31 international vice presidents that make up the Executive Board of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees based in Washington, D.C. Allen has been executive director of Oregon AFSCME Council 75 since 1995. Allen joins Greg Devereux, executive director of Washington AFSCME Council 28/Washington Federation of State Employees, as vice presidents designated to serve the Northwest Region, which includes Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Alaska. The election was held during AFSCME’s national convention in San Francisco, which ended Aug. 1.

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