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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 268

Offered January 13, 1995

Memorializing the President and the Congress to maintain federal funding of Amtrak, to exempt Amtrak from fuel taxes, to permit the states to use federal highway funds to support Amtrak, and to include Amtrak in any plans for a national transportation system.

 Patron—Waddell

Referred to the Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Amtrak is an energy-efficient and environmentally beneficial means of transportation, consuming about one-half as much energy per passenger mile as airline travel and causing less air pollution; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak provides mobility to citizens of many smaller communities poorly served by air and bus service, as well as to senior citizens, disabled people, and people with medical conditions that preclude flying; and

WHEREAS, on a passenger-mile basis, Amtrak is nine times safer than driving an automobile and operates safely even in severe weather conditions; and

WHEREAS, the number of passengers using Amtrak rose 48 percent from 1982 to 1993, allowing Amtrak to dramatically improve coverage of its operating costs from revenues; and

WHEREAS, expansion of Amtrak service by existing rail rights-of-way would cost less and use less land than either new highways or new airports and would further increase Amtrak's energy-efficiency advantage; and

WHEREAS, federal investment in Amtrak has fallen in the last decade, while it has risen for both highways and airports; and

WHEREAS, states may use highway trust fund money as an 80 percent federal match for a variety of non-highway programs, but they are prohibited from using such funds for Amtrak projects; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak pays a fuel tax that airlines do not pay; and

WHEREAS, Amtrak workers and vendors pay more in taxes than the federal government invests in Amtrak; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly hereby urge the President and the Congress of the United States to make no further reductions in funding for Amtrak; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the General Assembly request that Amtrak be excused from paying fuel taxes that the airlines do not pay, that the states be permitted to use federal highway trust fund moneys on Amtrak projects if they so choose, and that federal officials include a strong Amtrak component in any plans for a national transportation system; and, be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Clerk of the Senate transmit copies of this resolution to the President of the United States, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the United States Senate, and the members of the Virginia congressional delegation so that they may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly of Virginia.

INTRODUCED

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