Affiliated with: AFL-CIO
International Association of Fire Fighters
Washington State Labor Council

Washington State Council of Fire Fighters

June 8, 2016

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Washington State Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee:

Last Friday's oil train derailment and fire in Mosier, Oregon, is a stark reminder that first responders, rail workers, communities, waterways and pristine lands remain in harm's way from Bakken oil train traffic through our state.

The account given by firefighters of the Mosier response and by others who have responded to similar incidents across North America make it clear these fires are exceedingly difficult to extinguish, even under unusually ideal circumstances. What happened in Mosier could have just as easily happened in a population center like Spokane or Seattle, resulting in even greater tragedy.

You know our position on these matters. In June 2014, delegates at our statewide convention called for an immediate halt to the movement of Bakken crude by rail until there has been a determination that it is safe to transport. Clearly, given the Mosier incident, there has been no such determination.

The upcoming summer fire season is shaping up to be another dry and dangerous one. Resources will be stretched thin, and evidence keeps growing that there is no safe way to transport Bakken crude. A derailment and fire in dry wildfire fuels with high winds could easily overwhelm available personnel and equipment in many parts of our state and grow into a conflagration of immense proportions.

We urge you to make a request similar to Oregon Governor Brown's by asking the U.S. Department of Transportation to use its authority to prohibit rail transport of Bakken crude through our state until there has been a full investigation into the cause of the Mosier oil train derailment.

In addition, please consider the use of your executive authority to reject plans for oil terminals now under review and ask your legal staff to investigate the proclamation of a state of emergency under RCW 43.06.220(l)(i), allowing you to prohibit the continued rail transportation of this dangerous fuel.

Dennis J. Lawson, President • Greg B. Markley, Secretary-Treasurer
1069 Adams Street Southeast, Olympia, WA 98501 • 1-800-572-5762 • (360) 943-3030
Fax (360) 943-2333 • E-mail: wscff@wscff.org • Website: www.wscff.org

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We appreciate the efforts you have made to date on this subject and stand ready to meet with you, as do other members of our Solidarity Roundtable on Oil, to work toward solutions to this on-going environmental and community crisis.

Sincerely,

Dennis Lawson, President.
Washington State Council of Fire Fighters

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