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I write to express my concerns regarding the proposed merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern. As someone who strongly supports free enterprise, I also believe healthy competition is essential to a strong economy. While mergers can often strengthen businesses, they should not reduce competition in ways that negatively affect consumers, industries, or states that rely on a competitive marketplace.

Georgia has invested heavily in becoming one of the nation's premier logistics and transportation hubs. Our ports, manufacturers, farmers, forestry industry, and small businesses all depend on reliable and competitive freight rail service.

The proposal also raises concerns about Georgia's economy beyond freight service. Norfolk Southern has long maintained a significant corporate presence in Atlanta, supporting high-quality jobs and economic investment throughout our state. Reports indicating that executive leadership and corporate operations would be centered elsewhere deserve careful consideration, as those jobs and investments have meaningful impacts on Georgia communities.

Finally, this merger is about more than intermodal freight. Industries that move lumber, paper products, aggregates, agricultural commodities, chemicals, and other essential materials rely on competitive rail service every day. Reducing competition could limit routing options, weaken negotiating leverage for shippers, and ultimately increase costs that ripple throughout the supply chain and are passed on to consumers.

The Surface Transportation Board has an important responsibility to determine whether this transaction serves the public interest. I respectfully encourage the Board to carefully consider the long-term effects this merger may have on competition and Georgia's economy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James Burchett
Majority Whip