
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

**2015 REPORT
& LOOK AHEAD**



MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN THUNE

December 30, 2015

The Commerce Committee's efforts in 2015 yielded significant results. We passed impactful legislation that was signed into law, conducted necessary oversight, and positioned numerous bipartisan proposals put forth by panel members for passage in 2016.

I am especially proud of our committee's efforts to work through differences that allowed us to pass the longest transportation reauthorization bill since 1998 that contained numerous railroad policy reforms, safety improvements, and consumer protections. The President also signed into law the committee's work regarding the first major reform of the Surface Transportation Board (STB), which is responsible for economic oversight of the nation's freight rail system. Without a question, these policy achievements will make a positive difference for individuals, families, and our nation's economy. This accomplishment also underscores that Congress can work together and secure major achievements.

In 2016, we have significant work in front of us, and nothing in our committee's jurisdiction looms larger than passing a reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the opportunity to enact reforms creating a safer and more efficient aviation sector. With my friend and the committee's ranking member Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), we will also continue pursuing important efforts to protect a free and open Internet as well as the expansion of wireless broadband.

I hope this update on committee activity is a useful guide to the work we are pursuing at the Commerce Committee. None of these efforts would be possible without the continued collaboration from committee members, including the chairs and ranking members of our six subcommittees.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "John Thune". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" and last name "Thune" clearly distinguishable.



SENS. RICHARD BLUMENTHAL (D-CONN.) & JERRY MORAN (R-KAN.)

2015

BY THE NUMBERS

32 proposals enacted into law

7 additional proposals passed the Senate

50 bills approved by the Committee

23 full committee hearings

28 subcommittee hearings

10 markups

COMMITTEE ACTION ENACTED INTO LAW

S. 127, STOP MOTORCYCLE CHECKPOINT FUNDING ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.)

S. 143, U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY IMPROVEMENTS ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)

S. 304, MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY WHISTLEBLOWER ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.), Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.)

S. 592, IMPROVING THE TRANSITION BETWEEN EXPERIMENTAL PERMITS AND COMMERCIAL LICENSES FOR COMMERCIAL REUSABLE LAUNCH VEHICLES*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Mark Udall (D-N.M.)

S. 650, RAILROAD SAFETY AND POSITIVE TRAIN CONTROL EXTENSION ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.), Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.)

S. 766, DRIVER PRIVACY ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.)

S. 769, TRACK, RAILROAD, AND INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. John Thune (R-S.D.), Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.)

S. 797, RAILROAD INFRASTRUCTURE FINANCING IMPROVEMENT ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.)

S. 806, DRUG-FREE COMMERCIAL DRIVER ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Ron Johnson (R-Wis.)

S. 808, SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD REAUTHORIZATION ACT

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

S. 834, SPORT FISH RESTORATION AND RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

S. 976, SPACE RESOURCE EXPLORATION AND UTILIZATION ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Patty Murray (D-Wash.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)

S. 1040, ROV IN-DEPTH EXAMINATION ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska)

S. 1173, RAECHEL AND JACQUELINE HOUCK SAFE RENTAL CAR ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

SYMBOL INDEX

* Key elements included
in enacted legislation





RANKING MEMBER BILL NELSON (D-FLA.)

ENACTED INTO LAW

S. 1182, JSA BROADCAST TV BILL*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.)

S. 1297, U.S. COMMERCIAL SPACE LAUNCH COMPETITIVENESS ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Gary Peters (D-Mich.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), Tom Udall (D-N.M.)

S. 1298, PORT PERFORMANCE ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.)

S. 1326, MARITIME ADMINISTRATION ENHANCEMENT ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.)

S. 1359, THE E-WARRANTY ACT

Lead sponsor: Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

S. 1433, IMPROVING DRIVER SAFETY ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.)

S. 1467, PEDESTRIAN SAFETY ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii)

S. 1535, SAFETY THROUGH INFORMED CONSUMERS ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.)

S. 1626, RAILROAD REFORM, ENHANCEMENT, AND EFFICIENCY ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.)

S. 1669, TRUCK SAFETY REFORM ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.)

S. 1672, COMMERCIAL DRIVER ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.)

S. 1732, COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.)

S. 1741, TIRE EFFICIENCY, SAFETY, AND REGISTRATION ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

H.R. 23, NATIONAL WINDSTORM IMPACT REDUCATION ACT REAUTHORIZATION

Lead sponsor: Rep. Randy Neugebauer (R-Texas)

H.R. 719, TSA OFFICE OF INSPECTION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Lead sponsor: Rep. John Katko (R-N.Y.)

H.R. 720, GERARDO HERNANDEZ AIRPORT SECURITY ACT

Lead sponsor: Rep. John Katko (R-N.Y.)

H.R. 774, ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING ENFORCEMENT ACT

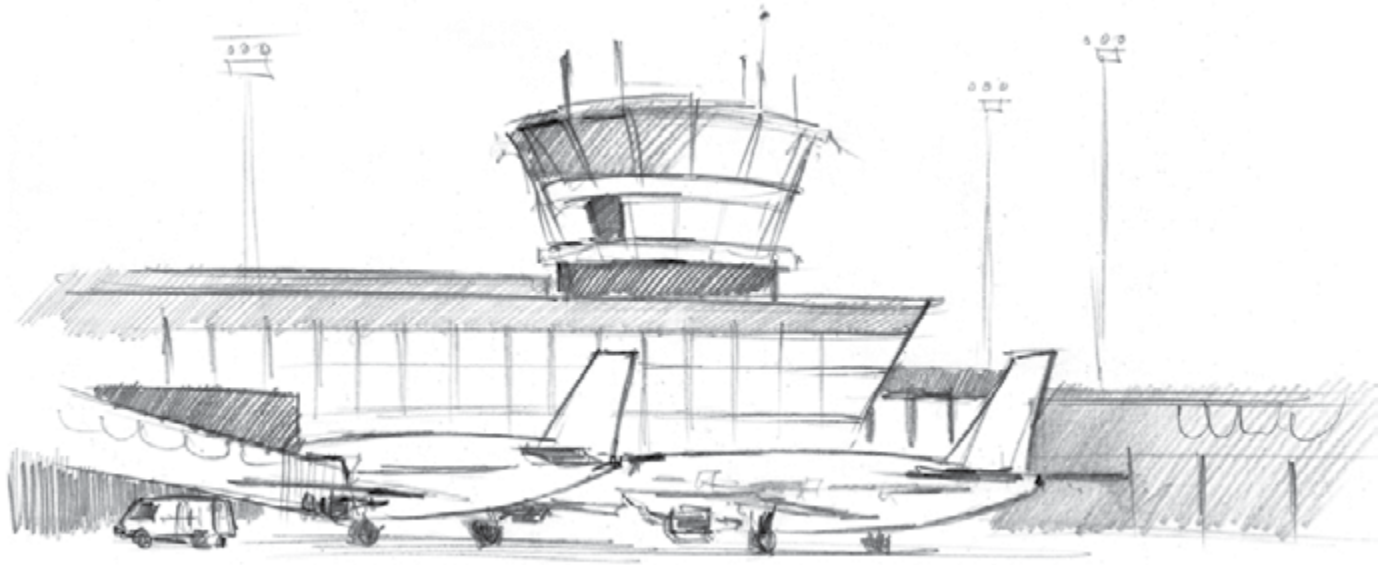
Lead sponsor: Rep. Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D-Guam)

H.R. 1020, STEM EDUCATION ACT

Lead sponsor: Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

SYMBOL INDEX

* Key elements included
in enacted legislation



MORE SENATE-PASSED BILLS

S. 142, CHILD NICOTINE POISONING PREVENTION ACT

Lead sponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Tom Udall (D-N.M.)

S. 253, FCC CONSOLIDATED REPORTING ACT

Lead sponsor: Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii)

S. 571, PILOT BILL OF RIGHTS ACT 2

Lead sponsor: Sen. James Inhofe (R-Okla.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Tom Udall (D-N.M.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), Ted Cruz (R-Texas), Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.)

S. 1611, COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION ACT*

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

S. 2044, CONSUMER REVIEW FREEDOM ACT

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.)

S. 2328, NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM AMENDMENTS ACT

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)

H.R. 34, TSUNAMI WARNING, EDUCATION, AND RESEARCH ACT

Lead sponsor: Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.)



SEN. STEVE DAINES (R-MONT.)

LEGISLATIVE SPOTLIGHT:

FIXING AMERICA'S SURFACE TRANSPORTATION (FAST) ACT

KEY FACTS:

- The Senate passed the FAST Act by a vote of 83-16 on December 3, 2015, and it was signed into law the next day.
- It is the first multi-year transportation bill since 2005 and the longest since 1998.
- The Commerce Committee, along with three other Senate committees and counterpart committees in the House of Representatives, were responsible for respective components of the bill.
- The bill creates certainty for investments and will help to address long overdue transportation projects.
- Passage of the FAST Act is a significant legislative accomplishment and includes key rail policy, auto safety, and transportation planning provisions approved by the Commerce Committee.

OVERSIGHT SUCCESSES

Senate committees not only write laws, they have an obligation to ensure that laws work as intended and guard against the misuse of taxpayer dollars. Oversight efforts at the Commerce Committee this year have contributed to both legislation and agency actions to address problems:

Transportation Security Administration

Reports of missteps by airports in managing security badges led the committee to send multiple inquiries about the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) efforts to hold airport operators accountable for security protocol failures. As a result of this oversight, the committee secured a commitment from the new TSA Administrator to develop an action plan addressing deficiencies. This oversight also led to the inclusion of reforms in legislation (S. 2361) giving TSA more tools and authority to eliminate problems with the issuance of airport security badges.

Auto Safety Recalls

The committee's vigilance has targeted safety failures in the auto industry and critical mistakes by federal regulators. Committee investigation of deadly incidents caused by defective airbags heightened public awareness of an urgent safety recall. Looking at this recall and others, the committee also recognized that the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the nation's auto safety regulator, had failed to identify and respond to troubling defects. In response, the committee mandated that NHTSA implement accountability reforms prescribed in an independent audit of the agency and created new whistleblower incentives for employees in the auto industry to bring critical safety defects to the attention of regulators earlier.

Wireless Auctions

When the federal government sells licenses for wireless spectrum bands, American taxpayers are entitled to fair payment as determined by competitive auctions. But when large bidders attempt to game the system and claim discounts intended to help smaller firms compete, the public is shortchanged. In early 2015, Chairman John Thune asked the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to investigate apparent collusion of bidders claiming discounts for "very small businesses." Following the chairman's request, the FCC moved to protect the public's interest and invalidated the \$3.3 billion discount.

WHAT'S NEXT?

As 2016 begins, the Commerce Committee will work to advance new legislation and seek full Senate consideration of proposals already approved by the committee.

Technology & Science

In early 2016, the committee will introduce and consider the much-anticipated MOBILE NOW Act to accelerate the deployment of mobile broadband that fuels our technology economy. Sens. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) and Gary Peters (D-Mich.) have also hosted roundtables and invited public input on setting federal research and development policy priorities, an effort that is expected to result in legislation.

Aviation

Congress must act before programmatic authorizations expire on March 31st for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the federal agency that regulates and oversees all aspects of the U.S. civilian aviation system. In 2015, Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), the Aviation Subcommittee chair, held several aviation hearings that will inform the development of a legislative proposal. This legislation will reauthorize funding and enact important reforms to the laws governing unmanned aircraft systems, air traffic control, and the aircraft certification process to make the U.S. aerospace sector more competitive in the global market.

Safety and Consumer Protection

Building on the committee's robust oversight efforts, the committee plans to press the case for enactment of committee approved legislation protecting the safety and rights of consumers. S. 2044, the Consumer Review Freedom Act, will help protect the rights of consumers to offer truthful criticism of products and services by banning clauses in "terms of service" that prohibit critical reviews. S. 2276, the SAFE PIPES Act, will enhance the safety of the nation's oil and natural gas pipeline network. The committee will work to send these bills to the president's desk for signature in 2016.



CHAIRMAN JOHN THUNE



SENS. AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MINN.), JOE MANCHIN (D-W.Va.), ROY BLUNT (R-MO.), CORY GARDNER (R-COLO.), & CORY BOOKER (D-N.J.)

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