

Senate Resolution 376

By: Senators Robertson of the 29th, Albers of the 56th, Anderson of the 24th, McLaurin of the 14th, Hickman of the 4th and others

A RESOLUTION

1 Urging the United States Congress to pass S-576 The Railway Safety Act of 2023; and for
2 other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, on February 3, 2023, a Norfolk Southern freight train derailed and 11 tank cars
4 carrying hazardous materials left the tracks, subsequently ignited, and released hazardous
5 materials into the air and the groundwater of East Palestine, Ohio, and surrounding
6 communities; and

7 WHEREAS, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) performed an investigation,
8 and preliminary reports show that the derailment was caused by an overheated wheel bearing
9 of a railcar, which could have been prevented with proper maintenance; and

10 WHEREAS, the Norfolk Southern derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, highlighted many
11 known deficiencies in safety practices in the freight rail industry and the transportation of
12 hazardous materials by rail; and

13 WHEREAS, a new method of railroad operation called PSR was implemented on CSX and
14 Norfolk Southern and it has resulted in the closure of rail yards and maintenance facilities,

15 the reduction in maintenance of rail cars and locomotives, short staffing, longer trains,
16 blocked crossings, and a reduction in reliable service to rail shippers; and

17 WHEREAS, a group of bi-partisan United States Senators have introduced S-576 The
18 Railway Safety Act of 2023, which prioritizes the safety concerns expressed by the public
19 and the rail worker alike by implementing stricter safety standards and strengthening federal
20 oversight by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and its modal
21 administrations: the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Pipeline and Hazardous
22 Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), working to prevent and mitigate any future
23 derailments of trains carrying hazardous material; and

24 WHEREAS, the safeguards offered in S-576 The Railway Safety Act of 2023 include but are
25 not limited to a nationwide mandate for well-trained two-person crews on all freight trains,
26 restrictions on train length and weight, improved regulations for wayside defect detectors,
27 speed restrictions, universalized track and rail-car maintenance standards, higher standards
28 for tank cars carrying hazardous material, emergency response plans for communities and
29 rail carriers, reduced or eliminated blocked crossings, and an increase in fines for rail
30 companies that do not adhere to rail safety protocols; and

31 WHEREAS, in Georgia, there are 4,700 miles of active rail lines and 27 freight railroads that
32 carry more than 190 million tons of freight through communities and across the state; and

33 WHEREAS, Georgia's freight railroads haul many hazardous chemicals including but not
34 limited to anhydrous ammonia, chlorine, ethanol, gasoline, hydrochloric acid, sodium
35 hydroxide, and sulfuric acid, which could pose a threat to the safety of the public and
36 national security if handled improperly; and

37 WHEREAS, the Georgia State Senate believes that no family in Georgia should be forced
38 to face the horror of fleeing their homes because hazardous materials have spilled or caught
39 fire in their community, and Georgians are now rightfully concerned about the safety of
40 railroads carrying hazardous materials as trains travel through their communities.

41 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE that the members of this body
42 strongly urge the United States Congress to pass S-576 The Railway Safety Act of 2023 to
43 protect our citizens and ensure that a tragedy like the one in East Palestine, Ohio, does not
44 happen in our great state.

45 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of the Senate is authorized and directed
46 to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the public and the
47 press.