

Duckworth Highlights Impact of COVID-19 on Amtrak Employees After Senate Republicans' Refusal to Address Transportation Workforce Needs

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Ranking Member of the U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Subcommittee on Transportation and Safety that has jurisdiction over Amtrak, this week questioned Amtrak President and CEO William J. Flynn about the impacts of Senate Republican obstruction of a COVID-19 relief package on Amtrak's workforce during a U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation hearing. Flynn confirmed Amtrak has already begun to furlough roughly 2,000 employees due to lost revenues caused by COVID-19. The U.S. House of Representatives-passed *HEROES Act* included funding

for Amtrak to prevent these cuts, but Senate Republicans' "skinny" proposals specifically excluded funding to protect Amtrak's workforce. Video of today's hearing is available [here](#).

"Amtrak had enjoyed record ridership in 2019 and was on track for another stellar year in 2020 before the pandemic broke," Duckworth said. "As Amtrak closed in on its first-ever annual operating profit, the pandemic caused 97 percent of its ridership to evaporate in a matter of weeks. If either of the Republican 'skinny' bills were to become law as drafted, Amtrak would still be forced to furlough employees and reduce service. It's unfortunate that Leader McConnell and his Republican colleagues continue to play games with the livelihoods of so many workers and their families."

Yesterday, Duckworth [voted against](#) the Republican "skinny" COVID-19 relief proposal, which lacked the necessary protections for hardworking Illinoisans and working families. She also [voted against](#) a similar proposal in September. Earlier this year, Duckworth [supported](#) the *Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act*, which provided more than \$1 billion in funding for Amtrak, including \$239 million state supported routes that covered Illinois Amtrak costs.