

# **TESTIMONY OF DAVID ARMSTRONG FINK**

## **Nominee to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration**

### **Before the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation United States Senate**

**May 13, 2025**

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, Members of the Committee—

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Being President Trump's nominee for Federal Railroad Administrator is the honor of a lifetime.

I am grateful to President Trump for placing his trust in me, and I am deeply thankful to Secretary Duffy for his confidence in my ability to lead the FRA.

I am joined today by my wife Linda and my son Andrew. My daughter Hillary is eight months pregnant with our first grandchild and is unable to travel. My wife and family have been very supportive during my career, and I am forever thankful for that support.

As I sit here today before the Senate Commerce, Science, & Transportation Committee, I think back to my first trip to Washington in 1966, I was five years old. My grandfather Andy Fink and I hopped on a Pennsylvania Railroad clocker from 30<sup>th</sup> station, we spent the day touring the city. The thing I most remember is my visit to the Smithsonian American History Museum. In that museum is a very large green Southern Railway steam locomotive. I still love to visit that spot and look at that locomotive. Little did I know at that time, I would be a fifth-generation railroader, and nominee to lead the Federal Railroad Administration.

I got my start in the railroad industry as a 15-year-old summer track worker for Conrail in 1976. I had two co-op jobs with the Boston and Maine Railroad while at Northeastern University. After graduate school at Penn State, I worked for General Motors and was able to see the transportation user side of the railroad business. I have also worked in the railway supply business running a railroad crosstie manufacturing company. In 1998, I joined Guilford Rail System as Executive Vice President, and in 2006 I became President of Pan Am Railways, the nation's largest regional railroad.

Our freight railroad system is the envy of the world. It moves what the nation needs for energy. It moves what the population eats. It moves the parts to the automobile assembly line and it takes the finished vehicle to a final distribution location. It moves the containers from our ports. More importantly, it does this safely. Over the course of FRA's existence, freight rail's safety record has been on a positive trajectory for both train accidents and employee casualties. If confirmed, FRA will be dedicated to continuing that safety trend under my leadership.

The nation's rail network also moves millions of people across our great country. Amtrak, the national passenger rail system, provides intercity passenger rail service throughout and across the country, while a host of commuter rail systems provide more local service.

It is critical the agency focus on its primary mission, which is one of safety first. We also need to refresh government regulations, innovating where possible and removing burdensome and outdated roadblocks.

The railroad industry in the United States has been developing state-of-the-art technology to make a safe system even safer. Much of this technology is ready to be deployed and I look forward to ensuring FRA is a partner in advancing safety innovations and not a hinderance. If confirmed, one of my first jobs will be to get this safety technology out in the field, working to make the rail system even safer.

Another way I want to ensure FRA is focused on safety and efficiency is through its grant programs, which have grown significantly over the last four years. I know firsthand how the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program can support critical rail safety projects. I can also imagine there is room for improvement in the way FRA selects and delivers taxpayer funded projects.

I look forward to working with the many dedicated professionals at the FRA. They have an extremely important job regulating the safe operation of our nation's railroads. I also look forward to working with the employees of the railroads, both management and labor.

If I am fortunate to be confirmed as Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration, I will devote myself to helping the Secretary promote safe and efficient freight and passenger transportation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my statement, and I would be happy to answer the Committee's questions.

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