



North America's Building Trades Unions

July 20, 2017

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Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman  
Environment and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Honorable Thomas R. Carper, Ranking Member  
Environment and Public Works  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Barrasso and Carper:

On behalf of the 3 million skilled craft professionals that constitute the 14 affiliates of North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU), I am writing to express our opposition to S. 517, the so-called "Consumer and Fuel Retailer Choice Act." This legislation rolls back Clean Air Act regulations for fuel containing 15% ethanol, known as "E15," which would adversely impact air quality. The legislation could also impose additional costs on the domestic refining sector, while failing to address broader issues associated with the nation's ethanol and biofuel mandate – the Renewable Fuel Standard or (RFS) – that are raising costs for American refiners and threatening jobs.

The RFS has also created other issues that threaten domestic refining jobs. The skyrocketing cost for credits needed to comply with the RFS has already put East Coast refining jobs at risk; one refinery has already laid off employees and cut benefits in part due to these costs. Congress should consider reforming the RFS to address the threats to domestic refining jobs in the Northeast and across the nation before rolling back Clean Air Act restrictions to allow for fuel with greater concentrations of ethanol.

The domestic refining industry provides our members with thousands of high-paying jobs. When refineries invest in major projects or maintenance projects, known as turnarounds, they typically employ an additional 1,000 or more skilled craft workers. Northeast refiners are important to our members because work at those facilities represents the dominant source of work for building trades workers in the region.

Several environmental groups have noted that S. 517 will lead to more smog-forming emissions, threatening gains the Clean Air Act has achieved in enhancing air quality. States may be forced to impose more burdensome stationary source regulations on refiners and other manufacturing facilities to offset emissions increases associated with the expanded E15 use this legislation could facilitate. This is particularly a risk given the large volumes of biofuel mandated under the RFS, especially considering the fact that we are already importing biofuels to comply with the Energy Security & Independence Act.

For these reasons, I urge you and all Senators to vote "no" on S. 517.

Sincerely,

Sean McGarvey  
President

*Value on Display. EVERY DAY.*

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