



## Press Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **ARA TESTIFIES BEFORE HOUSE SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE ON RAIL TRANSPORTATION ACCESS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND FAMILY FARMERS**

Washington, DC, May 1, 2008 — The Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA) provided testimony before the House Small Business Committee regarding rail transportation access for small businesses and family farmers today. ARA Chairman Dan Weber, vice president of agronomy for Ceres Solutions, LLP, testified stating that rail services play a critical role in distributing necessary crop inputs and is a reasonable, cost-effective transport alternative.

“The railroad’s consolidation since the 1980s has resulted in abandoned service to smaller communities and increased costs for many agricultural retailers,” said Dan Weber, ARA chairman of the board. “ARA members support a railroad system that is financially sound, but it is important to have an infrastructure in place that allows for competition and has proper government oversight.

“America’s agricultural industry is currently faced with high fuel, fertilizer and transportation costs. As a result, if the railroads are left to operate in its present state, the agricultural industry’s productivity will be stalled and consumers will continue to be affected by increased food and energy costs. The railroad industry’s efforts to arbitrarily change tariffs, imposing excessive fuel surcharges, favoring unit trains and creating cost barriers; will stop shipments of critical agricultural fertilizer products, such as anhydrous ammonia.”

Weber concluded his testimony with six ARA recommendations to Congress: 1) reform the Surface Transportation Board (STB), 2) initiate a U.S. Department of Agriculture rail study, 3) establish increased transparency on railroad shipping rates and other fees, 4) evaluate the new rail car design to ensure it is effective and does not adversely impact deliveries to agricultural retail operations and rural communities, 5) maintain the common carrier obligation, and 6) Congress should review H.R. 1650 that supports the removal of railroads’ antitrust exemption and gives STB six months to bring railroad into compliance.

For more information, contact Richard Gupton or Carmen Haworth at (202) 457-0825. Or, visit [www.aradc.org](http://www.aradc.org).  
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The Agricultural Retailers Association (ARA) is a nonprofit trade association representing the interests of retailers across the United States on legislative and regulatory issues on Capitol Hill. As the political voice of agricultural retailers, ARA not only represents its membership but also educates

members on the political process and important issues affecting the industry.

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