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Senate Committee on Commerce,  
Science, and Transportation

# **MIDYEAR 2015 REPORT**

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A message from  
**CHAIRMAN JOHN THUNE**

August 6, 2015



**S**ince the Senate's fresh start in January, our panel of twenty-four senators has worked to spur job creation through policies that strengthen our nation's competitiveness in the global marketplace. This report offers an update on what we have accomplished in the first quarter of the 114th Congress and what we will focus on in upcoming months.

The Senate passage of legislation to reform passenger rail service (S. 1626), improve highway safety (S. 1732), and address challenges in our freight transport system (S. 808) highlights the early success of bipartisan efforts undertaken this year by the committee.

Beyond our most recent efforts to help pass a multi-year transportation bill to end the need for short-term extensions, we continue to work on a broad range of oversight and legislative reforms. Our initiatives range from more effective management of ocean fisheries to space and Internet policies that are critical to our nation's economic growth and scientific innovation.

From our six active subcommittees to the full committee membership, our committee continues efforts to forge a federal government that is more accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the constituents we serve.

Along with you, I look forward to an active committee calendar this fall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature of John Thune in blue ink, written in a cursive style.

*Committee activity*  
**BY THE NUMBERS**

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**36** bills approved by the Committee  
**9** bills passed the Senate  
**6** bills included in Senate-passed legislation

**18** full committee hearings  
**24** subcommittee hearings  
**5** legislative markups

**178%** increase of likes on Facebook  
**67%** increase of followers on Twitter

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SEN. JOHN THUNE (R-S.D.), COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN



SEN. BILL NELSON (D-FLA.), COMMITTEE RANKING MEMBER

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# Legislation passed **BY COMMITTEE**

*Since the 114th Congress convened in January, the Commerce Committee has approved the following 36 bills that fall under its legislative jurisdiction:*

## **IMPROVING OUR TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

- **S. 1732, COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION AND CONSUMER PROTECTION ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)  
Committee cosponsors: Sens. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.)
- **H.R. 719, TSA OFFICE OF INSPECTION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Rep. John Katko (R-N.Y.)
- **H.R. 720, GERARDO HERNANDEZ AIRPORT SECURITY ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Rep. John Katko (R-N.Y.)
- **S. 808, SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD REAUTHORIZATION ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)  
Committee cosponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)
- **S. 806, DRUG FREE COMMERCIAL DRIVER ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Sen. John Boozman (R-Ark.)  
Committee cosponsors: Sens. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.)
- **S. 1626, RAILROAD REFORM, ENHANCEMENT, AND EFFICIENCY ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)  
Committee cosponsor: Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.)
- **S. 650, RAILROAD SAFETY AND POSITIVE TRAIN CONTROL EXTENSION ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.)  
Committee cosponsors: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.), Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), John Thune (R-S.D.)

## **TECHNOLOGY, SPACE, & SCIENCE POLICY FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

- **S. 253, FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION CONSOLIDATED REPORTING ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.)  
Committee cosponsor: Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii)
- **S. 1551, DOTCOM ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)  
Committee cosponsors: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)
- **S. 1297, U.S. COMMERCIAL SPACE LAUNCH COMPETIVENESS ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas)  
Committee cosponsors: Sens. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Gary Peters (D-Mich.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Tom Udall (D-N.M.)
- **H.R. 1020, STEM EDUCATION ACT**  
Lead sponsor: Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas)

### **SYMBOL INDEX**

- Key elements included in bills that passed the U.S. Senate
- Passed in the U.S. Senate



SEN. KELLY AYOTTE (R-N.H.), SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIR  
AVIATION OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND SECURITY

# Legislation passed **BY COMMITTEE**

## PROTECTING CONSUMER SAFETY & CHOICE

### **S. 142, CHILD NICOTINE POISONING PREVENTION ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii)

### ■ **S. 304, MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY WHISTLEBLOWER ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.), Dean Heller (R-Nev.), Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.), Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Jerry Moran (R-Kan.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

### ● **S. 766, DRIVER PRIVACY ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.)

### **S. 1040, ROV IN-DEPTH EXAMINATION ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Dean Heller (R-Nev.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Steve Daines (R-Mont.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska)

### **S. 1182, JSA BROADCAST TV BILL**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.), Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

### ■ **S. 1359, E-WARRANTY ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

### **S. 1315, KNIFE OWNER'S PROTECTION ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Mike Enzi (R-Wyo.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), John Thune (R-S.D.)

### **S. 1250, NICHOLAS & ZACHARY BURT MEMORIAL CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING PREVENTION ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.)

## IMPROVING WEATHER FORECASTING & RESPONSE

### ■ **H.R. 23, NATIONAL WINDSTORM IMPACT REDUCTION ACT REAUTHORIZATION**

Lead sponsor: Rep. Randy Neugebauer (R-Texas)

### **H.R. 34, TSUNAMI WARNING, EDUCATION, & RESEARCH ACT**

Lead sponsor: Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.)

### **S. 1331, SEASONAL FORECASTING IMPROVEMENT ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii)

### **S. 1573, NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

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SEN. JERRY MORAN (R-KAN.), SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
CONSUMER PROTECTION, PRODUCT SAFETY,  
INSURANCE, AND DATA SECURITY



SEN. CORY BOOKER (D-N.J.), SUBCOMMITTEE RANKING MEMBER  
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND MERCHANT MARINE  
INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY, AND SECURITY  
+  
OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE, FISHERIES, AND COAST GUARD

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Legislation passed  
**BY COMMITTEE**

**MARITIME COMMERCE, RECREATION, & FISHERIES**

**S. 373, VESSEL INCIDENTAL DISCHARGE ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Kelly Ayotte (R-N.H.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Joe Manchin (D-W.Va.), Claire McCaskill (D-Mo.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), John Thune (R-S.D.), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

■ **S. 143, U.S. MERCHANT MARINE ACADEMY IMPROVEMENT ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.)

**S. 834, SPORT FISH RESTORATION & RECREATIONAL BOATING SAFETY ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

■ **S. 764, NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM AMENDMENTS ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska)

**S. 1326, MARITIME ADMINISTRATION ENHANCEMENT ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.)

**S. 1334, ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, & UNREGULATED FISHING ENFORCEMENT ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-Alaska)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Ed Markey (D-Mass.), Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska)

**S. 1335, NORTH PACIFIC FISHERIES CONVENTION IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii)

**S. 1251, NORTHWEST ATLANTIC FISHERIES AMENDMENTS ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Ed Markey (D-Mass.)

**S. 1336, SOUTH PACIFIC FISHERIES CONVENTION IMPLEMENTATION ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Brian Schatz (D-Hawaii)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska)

**H.R. 710, ESSENTIAL TRANSPORTATION WORKER ID CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT ACT**

Lead sponsor: Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee (D-Texas)

● **S. 1611, COAST GUARD AUTHORIZATION ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), Dan Sullivan (R-Alaska), Roger Wicker (R-Miss.)

● **S. 1298, PORTS PERFORMANCE ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. John Thune (R-S.D.)

Committee cosponsors: Sens. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.), Cory Gardner (R-Colo.)

**S. 1403, FLORIDA FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT ACT**

Lead sponsor: Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.)

Committee cosponsor: Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.)

**SYMBOL INDEX**

● Key elements included in bills that passed the U.S. Senate

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SEN. CLAIRE MCCASKILL (D-MO.), COMMITTEE MEMBER

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# Looking to the **WORK AHEAD**

*Advancing committee-approved legislation through the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and ultimately to the president for enactment is a top priority. As the 114th Congress moves forward, expect the committee to focus on the following key issues:*

## **A SECURE AND OPEN INTERNET**

Federal policies and efforts to safeguard critical information have fallen behind the reality of today's digital economy. Proposals to address overregulation of the Internet, modernize the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), secure cyberspace, and define consumer rights when personal information is lost in a data breach remain a continued focus of committee efforts. In addition, oversight of efforts to secure the federal government's own networks remain a priority.

## **WIRELESS BROADBAND & SPECTRUM REFORMS**

From telehealth medical services to the burgeoning Internet of Things (IOT), wireless broadband plays an increasingly critical role with U.S. innovation and economic growth. The federal government not only regulates and manages spectrum, which is what fuels wireless technology, but it is also a major owner of underutilized public airwaves. From oversight of spectrum auctions to promoting wireless broadband deployment, the committee will pursue policies that maximize public benefit of our airwaves as a valuable resource.

## **FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION REAUTHORIZATION**

The current authorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), which manages and is responsible for the safety and efficiency of our airspace, expires on September 30, 2015. The FAA and the aviation sector are struggling to implement satellite-based air traffic control, known as NextGen, and address challenges with unmanned aircraft systems. A multi-year reauthorization offers an opportunity to examine the current system and make key improvements that will benefit the traveling public. While a short-term extension is possible, the committee will focus on a long-term reauthorization.

## **TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

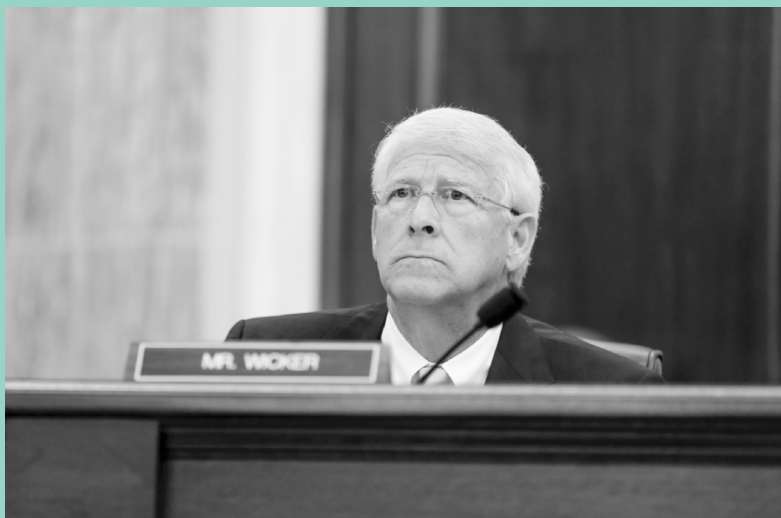
High profile failures and warnings from government watchdogs have heightened concerns about the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) ability to stay ahead of evolving security threats to the traveling public. On a bipartisan basis, the Commerce Committee expressed concern about the extended absence of a White House nominee to lead the agency and acted quickly to confirm a candidate after a qualified nomination was put forward. Systemic problems still plague TSA and the committee will press forward with legislative efforts to address them.

## **SPACE & SCIENCE**

Building on Senate passage of S. 1297, the U.S. Commercial Space Launch Competitiveness Act, the committee will continue work to provide clearer focus and policy direction for commercial space and NASA's exploration efforts. Supporting science as a priority, a bipartisan working group led by Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) and Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich.) will press ahead with efforts to introduce and advance bipartisan legislation to set federal research and development policy priorities within current budget realities.



SEN. DEB FISCHER (R-NEB.), SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION AND MERCHANT  
MARINE INFRASTRUCTURE, SAFETY, AND SECURITY



SEN. ROGER WICKER (R-MISS.), SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, AND THE INTERNET

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# Looking to the **WORK AHEAD**

## **HIGHWAY BILL**

While the Senate has approved a multi-year surface transportation bill with key freight and passenger rail (S. 1626) and safety (S. 1732) reforms put forward by the Commerce Committee, the House of Representatives has yet to pass a multi-year bill. With a current extension lasting only until the end of October, the House and Senate will have to work together to enact critical reforms.

## **PIPELINE SAFETY**

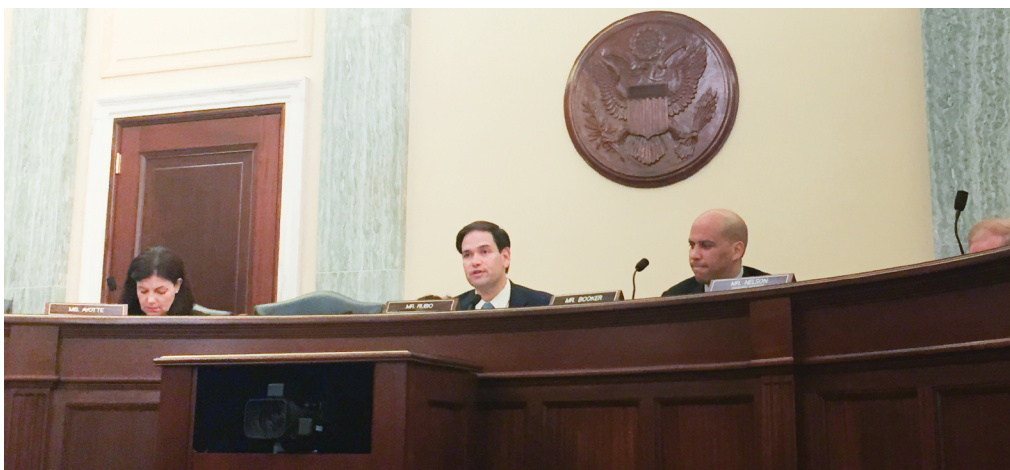
Authorization for the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), a component agency of the Department of Transportation, expires at the end of September. While this agency does not require an extension to avoid disruption of operations, reports have cast significant doubts about its effectiveness in protecting the public. The committee will consider needed reforms of PHMSA as part of a reauthorization this year.

## **COAST GUARD REAUTHORIZATION**

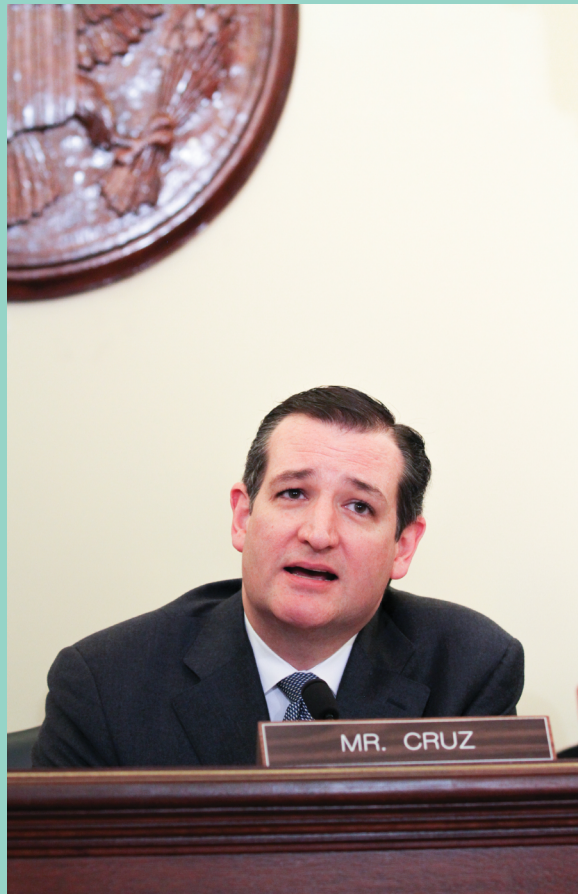
The two-year Coast Guard Reauthorization Act passed the House earlier this year and also passed out of the Commerce Committee. Full consideration in the Senate is expected this fall. Commerce Committee priorities for the legislation include new authorities to combat illicit trafficking and maintaining current funding levels for the military branch that patrols and protects our coastline.

## **CONSUMER PROTECTION**

Building on investigative and legislative efforts to enhance protections of consumer rights and safety, the Commerce Committee will continue proactive efforts to identify and address commercial and regulatory failures that create unnecessary and unacceptable public risks.



SEN. MARCO RUBIO (R-FLA.), SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
OCEANS, ATMOSPHERE, FISHERIES, AND COAST GUARD



SEN. TED CRUZ (R-TEXAS), SUBCOMMITTEE CHAIRMAN  
SPACE, SCIENCE, AND COMPETITIVENESS

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