

Jill Billings

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STATE SENATOR
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Local Legislators introduce Rail Safety Legislation

Rep. Jill Billings and Sen. Shilling reintroduce Wisconsin Rail Safety Act

Madison, Wis – Today, Rep. Jill Billings (D-La Crosse), along with Senator Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse) introduced the Wisconsin Rail Safety Act, which aims to increase safety, preparedness, coordination and training between rail companies operating in Wisconsin and local emergency management agencies.

“We cannot wait for another train derailment to occur before we take action to improve the safety of our rail system and preparedness of our local responders,” Rep. Billings said. “We have been lucky in recent years that we haven’t had any derailments in Wisconsin, but we shouldn’t have to rely on luck to ensure the safety of our communities and citizens.”

The bill, which was modeled after rail safety legislation enacted in Minnesota, would do the following:

- Provide for more state rail track inspectors
- Provide training for local emergency first responders with jurisdiction along railroad routes
- Require railroad companies to submit prevention and response plans to the state
- Provide guidelines for coordination and response timelines in the event of a derailment
- Require post-incident review and report to the legislature after a derailment
- Require the Division of Emergency Management, under the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, to submit a report to the legislature on emergency preparedness, assessment of training needs for first responders statewide, inventory of both public and private resources available in the event of a derailment/discharge, and recommendations to the legislature to improve preparedness and safety of our citizens

“We recognize that the freight rail industry is an important part of Wisconsin’s economy,” Sen. Shilling said. “In La Crosse, rail infrastructure has been a part of the city’s history and identity since its earliest days. Yet, the recent increase in rail traffic has led to heightened safety concerns in our community and across the state. Wisconsin residents rightfully want to know what measures are being taken by state and federal regulators and industry stakeholders to ensure meaningful oversight and emergency response readiness.”

This legislation was first introduced during the 2015-16 legislative session after Rep. Billings and Sen. Shilling listened to and worked with the local Citizens Acting for Rail Safety (CARS) organization. CARS is supportive of this legislation.

“This bill would directly impact members of the La Crosse community – where oil trains run right through our city every day – and hundreds of other communities across Wisconsin by ensuring safe, scrutinized rail transport,” Billings concluded.

A copy of the legislation can be found [here](#).

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