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Proposed Legislation will Strengthen Pipeline Safety and Enforcement, U.S. Transportation Secretary LaHood Says

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today sent to Congress proposed legislation to provide stronger oversight of the nation's pipelines and increase the penalties for violations of pipeline safety rules. This legislation complements the department's additional planned regulatory initiatives to continue to improve pipeline safety.

"The nation's pipelines, our energy highways, are by far the safest way to quickly transport large volumes of fuels and other hazardous liquids over long distances," Secretary LaHood said. "However, as the recent oil pipeline failures near Marshall, Mich., and Romeoville, Ill., have shown, as well as the tragic gas pipeline explosion in Northern California, the Department needs stronger authority to ensure the continued safety and reliability of our nation's pipeline network."

The proposed "Strengthening Pipeline Safety and Enforcement Act of 2010" would increase from \$1 million to \$2.5 million the maximum fine for the most serious violations involving deaths, injuries, or major environmental harm. It also would provide additional resources for the enforcement program by authorizing 40 additional inspection and enforcement personnel over four years.

The legislation would require a review of whether rules requiring the strictest safety requirements only for "high-consequence" areas – urban centers, sensitive areas or navigable waterways – should be applied to entire pipelines, including sections located in rural areas.

The proposal would eliminate exemptions from safety regulations for pipelines that gather hazardous liquids upstream of transmission pipelines. It also would authorize the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration to collect additional data on pipelines, including information on previously unregulated lines. It would provide for improved coordination with states and other agencies on inspector training and oversight of pipeline construction and expansion projects involving both gas and hazardous liquids pipelines.

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In addition, the proposal would ensure that standards are in place for biofuel and carbon dioxide pipelines, as well as amend the definition of hazardous liquids to expressly include all biofuels and subject their transportation to DOT safety standards.

A text of the proposed legislation is available at <http://testimony.ost.dot.gov/final/>

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