

**Christina Andriotis**

Testimony on the National Popular Vote: **House Bill 6163**

March 11, 2011

The National Popular Vote addresses a problem at the heart of our democracy—the fundamental inequality of every vote in the United States. Because only a small number of swings states matter, the voices of most Americans are simply not heard. This in and of itself is an important issue to address.

However, it is important to note how the problem extends beyond a civics discussion. The point I would like to make to the Committee today is that politics does influence policy. The fact that our national elections exclude Connecticut creates difficulties for us long after the election is over.

Last week, the *Hartford Courant* reported that both of Connecticut's Senators signed a letter to Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood asking that the \$2.4 billion investment in high-speed rail initially slated for Florida, be redirected here.<sup>1</sup> The Governor of Florida rejected the funds, and so Connecticut and other states in the Northeast now have a shot at receiving much needed money to improve the train system that is so vital to our regional and national economy.

This does, however, raise the question of why this money was given to Florida in the first place. As our federal delegation noted, the Acela train running from Washington to Boston is the only high speed rail line in the country. But it initially received only 2% of the money set aside for that kind of infrastructure. Florida, on the other hand, seems to not even want the investment.

When a \$100 million federal grant to update and expand the University of Connecticut Health Center suddenly found its way to Ohio, many in our state were shocked. But perhaps we should not have been as surprised as we were.

Obviously, our federal delegation fights hard for money for Connecticut. The ultimate distribution of money is affected by many decision makers in Washington. The fact is, however, politics is a part of the calculus for every federal policy.

The National Popular Vote bill would erase the borders between states and put all fifty states in play. That is the way it should be. Presidential administrations should have all fifty states in mind as they contemplate their policies – and their reelection campaigns.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://blogs.courant.com/rick\\_green/2011/02/northeast-corridor-senators-gi.html](http://blogs.courant.com/rick_green/2011/02/northeast-corridor-senators-gi.html)

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 25, 2011

The Honorable Ray LaHood  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary LaHood,

In light of the State of Florida's decision to reject \$2.4 billion in High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program funds, we urge you to reprogram these funds to projects on the Northeast Corridor. Our states are ready to put these funds to good use to improve our existing high speed rail service, reduce congestion, and create jobs.

As you know, the Northeast Corridor is critically important to our nation's transportation infrastructure. The region served by the Corridor accounts for roughly one-fifth of the nation's gross domestic product and twenty percent of our nation's population. More than 250 million rail passengers use the Corridor annually and the Acela Express has built the foundation for high-speed rail service throughout the country. In a recent report, *America 2050* rated the Northeast Corridor as the region with the greatest potential to attract high-speed rail ridership in the United States.

Improving passenger rail service on the Northeast Corridor is necessary to accommodate the sixty percent increase in passengers expected by 2030 and will alleviate severe congestion on the region's highways and airspace. At a time when numerous states have rejected federal funding from the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program, we note that high-speed rail's potential on the Northeast Corridor is proven. For example, ridership on the Acela Express has risen six hundred percent during its nine years of service.

Although the Northeast Corridor has the only operating high-speed train in the country, the Corridor has received less than two percent of the \$10.5 billion provided by Congress for the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail Program to date. We believe that this is an insufficient investment in the Northeast Corridor, given our region's position as a population and economic mega-region.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.