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August 25, 2015

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack,

On behalf of the Apache Railroad, an asset vital to Arizona's northeastern communities, I write to request an update on the status of its Community Facilities Guarantee Loan Application with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

With its loan application, the Apache Railroad seeks to continue operations that support industries important to the White Mountain's forests and local economy. With access to Burlington, Northern, and Santa Fe railroads along with Interstate 40, the Apache Railroad provides infrastructure important to the State's continuing efforts to thin its forests and support its businesses in the region—made fragile by the recent closure of a local paper mill. While the Apache Railway lost many of its employees to that closure, it has since rebuilt its business and provides about 20 good-paying jobs, with plans to hire additional workers should the long-term future of the operation be secured.

I understand that local industries, such as Novo Star, are currently producing timber and developing plans for future expansion that would require the railway to export its products. Other prospective businesses, seeking to bring hundreds of jobs to the area, would also require the railway to remain operational before committing hundreds of millions of dollars in capital investment to the area. In my view, the Apache Railroad's infrastructure remains necessary for retaining business in an already fragile economy and attracting new industry to Navajo County.

I also understand that the USDA provides long-term financing for rural areas to continue to expand infrastructure necessary for economic development. To this end, the Apache Railroad has been working with USDA on a loan application through its Community Facilities Guaranteed Loan Program to provide such assistance.

With the foregoing in mind, I request a status update to the Apache Railroad's loan application currently pending before the USDA. Please note, I expect that whatever final action the USDA takes on this application be made in strict accordance with all applicable agency rules, regulations, and ethical guidelines.

Thank you in advance for your timely response to my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John McCain". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John McCain
United States Senator