

## Pennsylvania

# Commentary

## Letters

### Amtrak workers need a contract

The case for continued government funding for Amtrak is simple and should not be ideological. Amtrak is the most efficient intercity passenger railroad in the world.

Those who support privatization for Amtrak ignore the fact that Amtrak was once part of a private entity — the Penn Central Transportation Co. One of the reasons for its bankruptcy was the losses it took from privately operating intercity rail service. In creating Amtrak, Congress recognized that rail passenger service was critical to the transportation needs of America and required public funds to operate.

The business plan put for-

ward by Amtrak president David Gunn is designed to put Amtrak out of business. It would permit the privateers to loot this public asset before they dump it back on the government. Gunn and the Bush administration know that the best way to get rid of Amtrak is to get rid of its loyal employees and their unions, which lobby for Amtrak funding and struggle every day to produce this service. Our union members work under the most flexible, efficient work rules of any major railroad in the nation. Our union members are paid far less at Amtrak than our members on commuter railroads.

Despite our sacrifice, our union has not had a contract renewal for more than five years. While we are fighting for adequate Amtrak funding, our organized workforce cannot and will not sacrifice more. The Gunn administration must settle or agree to arbitrate our contract dispute. The last thing we need in this environment is a management-caused work stoppage on Amtrak.

**Jed Dodd**

Pennsylvania Federation  
Brotherhood  
of Maintenance of Way  
Employees Division  
Teamster Rail Division  
Philadelphia