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# **PROFESSIONAL AVIATION SAFETY SPECIALISTS**

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**STATEMENT OF DAVID SPERO  
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**BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION  
ON  
AMERICA BUILDS: AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEM  
INFRASTRUCTURE AND STAFFING**

**MARCH 4, 2025**

Chair Nehls, Ranking Member Cohen and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify on behalf of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS).

PASS represents approximately 11,000 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Defense employees throughout the United States and abroad. Among these employees are airway transportation systems specialists and aviation safety inspectors. PASS-represented employees in the FAA install, maintain, support and certify air traffic control and national defense equipment, inspect and oversee the commercial and general aviation industries, develop flight procedures, and perform quality analyses of complex aviation systems used in air traffic control in the United States and overseas. PASS members work to ensure the safety and efficiency of the aviation system that transports over 2.9 million airline passengers across more than 29 million square miles of airspace (domestic and U.S. airspace over oceans) at 65,728 facilities every day. The diversity of the PASS-represented workforce provides insight into the safety of the system they maintain and the industry they oversee. PASS members are tasked with ensuring that the U.S. air traffic control system remains the gold standard of aviation safety.

The work PASS members do every day is essential to the safe and efficient operation of this country's aviation system. PASS appreciates the opportunity to share information and recommendations regarding air traffic control systems, personnel and safety. The union looks forward to working with lawmakers to ensure that America builds on FAA staffing, training and modernization efforts in order to ensure the continued safety of the air traffic control system.

### **AIR TRAFFIC ORGANIZATION**

The largest bargaining unit PASS represents is in the Air Traffic Organization (ATO) Technical Operations unit, consisting of technical employees who install, maintain, repair and certify the radar, navigation, communication and power equipment that comprises the U.S. National Airspace System (NAS). These employees work on a variety of systems and equipment, including the Instrument Landing System (ILS), which provides both vertical and lateral guidance information for pilots to allow safe landings; Runway Status Lights, which automatically signal pilots and vehicle operators when it is unsafe to enter, cross or begin takeoff; and the Runway Incursion Device, a tool used as a memory aid to indicate whether an airport runway is occupied or closed before an aircraft is cleared to land or takeoff.

Within Technical Operations, PASS represents FAA airway transportation systems specialists (ATSS). These systems specialists ensure the functionality of communications, computers, navigational aids and power systems vital to safe air travel and the mission of pilots and air traffic controllers. PASS-represented employees in Flight Program Operations (AJF), Mission Support Services (AJV) and Air Traffic (AJT) also provide important support to the system by conducting flight inspections, developing instrument flight procedures and other important work.

### **Systems Specialist Staffing and Training**

Currently, there are more than 4,800 FAA systems specialists responsible for installing, operating, maintaining and repairing more than 74,000 radar, communications, navigational aids, computer automation, airport lighting, backup power, heating, ventilation and air conditioning

(HVAC) at FAA facilities.<sup>1</sup> This number of employees has been on a consistent decline for years, helped in part by the increasing number of retirements.

When discussing the systems specialist workforce at the FAA, a crucial element is the significance of adequate staffing and comprehensive training. Insufficient systems specialist staffing not only leads to prolonged restoration times and increased air traffic delays during outages but also poses challenges in ensuring adequate shift coverage, thereby escalating the risk of significant air traffic disruptions during an unscheduled system outage. PASS has consistently emphasized the critical need for sufficient systems specialist staffing and underscored the initial absence and now the slow progress of a reliable staffing model to guide staffing decisions and placements.

Recruiting and training new airway transportation systems specialists within the FAA is a meticulous and time-consuming process. FAA systems specialists are required to possess expertise across multiple systems, a proficiency that demands rigorous training. It can take up to three years to fully equip an FAA systems specialist with the necessary skills to execute all duties associated with the position effectively. Furthermore, the FAA faced setbacks in its training efforts when its academy in Oklahoma City was closed during the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department of Transportation Inspector General (IG) highlighted that FAA systems mandate specific training and certification, with systems specialists not being trained on every version of the system.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, individual systems specialists are limited in the equipment they can work on, complicating the overall workforce planning process. Moreover, the FAA's practice of not hiring new systems specialists before experienced ones retire results in a knowledge and expertise gap as seasoned employees exit without mentoring the incoming workforce. Alarming, in 2024, 33% of the systems specialists represented by PASS were age 55 or above.

Despite efforts to address staffing inadequacies, the FAA has been grappling with persistent challenges. The development of the Technical Operations Staffing Model (TSM) over more than a decade has revealed a significant shortfall of at least 800 airway transportation systems specialists in the workforce.<sup>3</sup> While the TSM aims to offer insights into the optimal number of systems specialists required, PASS contends that critical data points may be overlooked in this model. This shortfall underscores an urgent need to rectify the understaffing issue within the FAA systems specialists workforce. PASS stands prepared to collaborate with the FAA to devise a staffing plan that comprehensively considers all facets of the role, particularly focusing on the mandate of ensuring the safe and efficient operation of both aging and new systems and equipment.

It is imperative for the FAA to prioritize robust staffing strategies and streamlined training programs to bridge the existing gaps in the systems specialists workforce. Investing in workforce

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Aviation Administration, Airway Transportation Systems Specialists, updated October 6, 2022. Accessed February 27, 2025: [https://www.faa.gov/jobs/career\\_fields/aviation\\_careers/atss\\_join](https://www.faa.gov/jobs/career_fields/aviation_careers/atss_join). This number does not reflect the number of systems specialists that are fully certified.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Transportation Inspector General, *Opportunities Exist for FAA To Strengthen Its Workforce Planning and Training Processes for Maintenance Technicians*, Report No. AV2023027, May 2, 2023, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> See Addendum A: Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, "FAA Technical Operations Workforce," updated December 2024.

planning and training initiatives will not only enhance operational efficiency but also bolster safety protocols within the aviation industry.

## **Aging Infrastructure**

FAA systems specialists are confronted with the daunting task of managing aging systems that form the backbone of the NAS. The results of a 2024 survey conducted by PASS underscored some of the key concerns shared by systems specialists nationwide. These concerns include the challenges posed by obsolete equipment, cumbersome procedures, unreliable parts, system complexity, and inadequacies in workforce staffing and training.

One major hurdle faced by FAA systems specialists is the lack of a clear vision within the agency regarding the modernization of air traffic control systems. The slow pace of implementing new technologies is directly linked to the obsolescence of current systems. According to a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), a significant percentage of ATC systems are already unsustainable or at risk of becoming so in the near future.<sup>4</sup> This poses a pressing challenge for systems specialists striving to keep the NAS operational and safe.

One critical concern brought to light by systems specialists is the reliability issues plaguing essential systems such as the High Intensity Approach Lighting System with Sequenced Flashing Lights (ALSF-2). ALSF is critical for an airport in low visibility weather situations. If it is not working, the airport is downgraded, which means some aircraft cannot land. The failure of such systems can lead to substantial disruptions at airports, underscoring the urgency of addressing these maintenance challenges promptly.

Systems specialists have also highlighted the complexities surrounding the aging Fiber Optic Transmission System (FOTS) at major airports. The scarcity of replacement parts and the lack of training opportunities for newer technologies within the FOTS framework pose significant obstacles to system reliability and operational continuity. The impending retirement of experienced systems specialists further compounds these challenges, raising concerns about the future maintenance and upkeep of critical systems.

The obvious solution to this issue is expediting new systems into the NAS. For years, this has been the solution, yet the FAA has not taken full advantage of utilizing its own workforce for system upgrades. PASS strongly believes that the FAA's systems specialists workforce has the expertise and capability to assist with these upgrades. They are committed to the mission and with the proper resources and staffing, the issues identified could be rectified and systems updated.

For example, PASS recently learned of a member who played a pivotal role on a workgroup tasked with updating training for weather-related systems. This member, along with others on the workgroup, was able to consider the training for the older equipment and update it so it serves the needs of systems specialists in the field. The member did share that there was a push to limit the length of the training course. In other words, the program office was focused on making the

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<sup>4</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Air Traffic Control: FAA Actions Are Urgently Needed to Modernize Aging Systems*, GAO-24-107001, September 23, 2024, p. 15.

training course as basic and short as possible. Having a PASS member present—a federal employee with years of experience and expertise—allowed the group to put out a product that satisfied the needs of all. Again, the employees are not an impediment to upgrades and modernization.

By recognizing and responding to the concerns raised by PASS-represented systems specialists, the FAA can pave the way for a more resilient and technologically advanced air traffic control system that meets the demands of modern aviation practices and ensures the safety of all airspace users. The FAA should be encouraged to collaboratively work with PASS to improve and modernize the NAS.

## **AVIATION SAFETY**

PASS represents aviation safety inspectors and other employees within the Office of Aviation Safety (AVS), Flight Standards Service (AFS) and Aircraft Certification Service (AIR). Aviation safety inspectors are responsible for certification, education, oversight, surveillance and enforcement of the entire aviation system.

Aviation safety is paramount in ensuring the well-being of passengers and the efficiency of the NAS. However, inadequate inspector staffing continues to be a concern. The state of inspector staffing emphasizes the impact on safety oversight, the need for strategic workforce planning and the importance of collaborative solutions.

A 2021 IG report revealed alarming statistics, with 59% and 79% of Certificate Management Office and Flight Standards District Office managers reporting understaffing.<sup>5</sup> These shortages are attributed to factors such as increasing workloads, hiring difficulties, prolonged hiring processes, and the expanding responsibility of overseeing emerging technologies including unmanned aerial systems.

The agency itself has recognized the need to maintain a robust inspector workforce. According to the FAA, “To meet the safety needs of the NAS, AVS will need to recruit, hire, maintain, and retain a workforce with outstanding technical expertise, capabilities, and adaptability. Our efforts must ensure we can hire and retain the right people with the right skills and mindset, engaged at the right time, with systematic coordination between certification and operational suitability.”<sup>6</sup> PASS agrees with the FAA and we are eager to assist in the endeavor.

In fact, recent events, including the oversight failures at Boeing, underscore the necessity of proactive safety monitoring. However, the current FAA staffing model falls short in accurately determining the required number of aviation safety inspectors. PASS advocates for a revision of the staffing model in collaboration with the union to ensure accurate workforce planning and allocation.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General, *FAA Can Increase Its Inspector Staffing Model's Effectiveness by Implementing System Improvements and Maximizing Its Capabilities*, August 11, 2021, p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Federal Aviation Administration, *Aviation Safety Workforce Plan 2021-2030*, p. i.

The staffing inadequacies within the FAA inspector workforce pose significant threats to aviation safety and oversight. By prioritizing strategic workforce planning, revising staffing models, and fostering collaboration between stakeholders, the FAA can overcome current challenges and ensure a competent and sustainable inspector workforce. It is imperative to address these issues promptly to uphold the highest standards of safety and efficiency in the aviation industry.

## **FAA REAUTHORIZATION PRIORITIES AND STABLE FUNDING**

PASS thanks this subcommittee for their work to pass legislation reauthorizing the FAA through FY 2028. Important language in the legislation, that PASS supported, will go a long way toward protecting our workforce now and in the future.

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (Pub. L. No. 118-63) was signed into law last May. PASS provided support and background on many important elements of the bill including language directing the FAA to review and revise the aviation safety inspector staffing model; instructing the IG to review FAA workforce plans from the past five fiscal years and raising the safety standard of foreign repair stations to better align with U.S. standards.

Unfortunately, many of the elements contained within the law have yet to be addressed. PASS believes Congress must ensure that the FAA follow through with its directives in the reauthorization legislation to develop workforce plans and staffing models. Securing the strongest FAA workforce—and retaining that workforce—is essential to a safe and efficient aviation system and not an impediment to it.

PASS thanks lawmakers for including language in the law directing the agency to install 15 taxpayer-purchased instrument landing systems (ILS) that are in storage in Independence, Missouri. If properly staffed, the systems specialists PASS represents can be ready, and are capable of, completing this task. This is a prime example of the FAA taking steps toward identifying a solution but then failing to complete the work to implement it. While the language in the reauthorization law directs the FAA to install the ILS within 18 months of the law's passage (May 2024), PASS's attempts to coordinate with the agency to begin the project have gone unreturned. As far as PASS knows, the equipment—paid for by the taxpayer—is still not in service.

In addition, and in response to the recent tragedy at National Airport, PASS appreciates the communication from Committee Ranking Member Rick Larsen and members of the committee to Department of Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy urging the full implementation of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.

While the letter from the representatives was in response to the midair collision in January, the lawmakers urged swift and immediate action as the investigation into the accident continues. “[T]he Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have the opportunity to act now to ensure safer skies for the American public,” stated the letter.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Letter from House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Rick Larsen and members of the committee to Department of Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy. February 14, 2025.

PASS urges members of Congress to focus on fully implementing FAA reauthorization and establishing stable funding for the agency. Even now, the government continues to operate on a continuing resolution and long-term, stable funding for the agency remains unclear. In addition, PASS highlights the underutilization of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, which could be used for the modernization of the NAS. With projections showing a significant increase in the Fund's balance, it is crucial for the FAA to tap into these resources for the necessary upgrades.

As previously discussed, there are many areas in which the FAA could save money if it only utilized its workforce effectively. For instance, at the Dallas air traffic control tower (ATCT), a planned approximately \$26 million upgrade was unfortunately canceled due to funding issues. As a result, the FAA's local service center (SSC), despite being understaffed, had to step in to complete necessary repairs and maintenance to keep the tower running smoothly. This included replacing the failing HVAC system, which was leaking and unsustainable. With support from the FAA Technical Operations district office, the local SSC is now working to acquire and properly install two HVAC units to ensure continued air traffic services from this vital operational facility. This is essential not only for the safe functioning of the systems and equipment but the safety and comfort of the employees as well.

Another example of PASS-represented employees saving the agency a considerable amount of money is the Field Maintenance Program (FMP). The FMP contributes to the agency by serving as a construction team for projects that may have a direct or indirect impact on air traffic control operations. The FMP electronic technicians and other PASS-represented employees are ready to respond to emergencies, restorations and optimizations, eliminating the need for lengthy and expensive contracting processes. Examples of the work performed by the FMP is providing backup power to facilities to keep them operational in extreme weather conditions; participating in restoration activities such as replacing roofs on Very High Frequency Omni-Directional Range (VOR) structures and optimizing performance; and fully supporting replacement programs by removing old buildings and foundations, installing new buildings, trenching paths and installing radio frequency, electrical and fiber optic cabling, and assisting with the hook up of equipment. All of these activities performed by FMP employees, and many others, save the FAA vast sums of money simply by utilizing federal employees strategically.

Creative strategies are being implemented to ensure a successful installation process, with completion expected in a few weeks. This is all work performed by FAA employees at a cost savings to the agency.

## **THE IMPACT OF RECENT NOTICES AND DIRECTIVES**

Obviously, PASS must emphasize concerns with the recent communication from the administration regarding deferred resignations, terminating probationary employees and the overall push to purge the federal workforce. When it comes to federal employees at the FAA, PASS believes all employees support the safe operation of the NAS and eliminating positions or encouraging resignations should not be considered. In fact, these firings are having a demoralizing effect on the entire workforce and they are a distraction for the employees who are performing safety-critical work. Additionally, the chilling effect it is having in the public forum

will discourage skilled workers from seeking government employment with FAA, thereby exacerbating an already difficult situation.

PASS has been vocal in our disagreement with the blanket firing of probationary employees, including 132 represented by PASS. Eliminating probationary employees without identifying a conduct or performance issue is a major disruption to the system. All parts of this aviation ecosystem work alongside each other to accomplish a critical goal—the safety of the American flying public. This chain of support must remain strong from those working in offices to complete vital duties, to employees in the field with their hands on the equipment. The government should never pull people out of the aviation system without an analysis or thought of what the outcome could be. This is by definition, an introduction of risk. Any ‘fork’ thrown into that system threatens the safety and effectiveness of the system as a whole. It is contradictory to successful aviation safety management.

The employees who were fired served in integral positions in support of the FAA’s mission. They include:

**Aeronautical information specialists** – evaluation, selection and preparation of navigation maps, routes, chart, procedures and flight paths.

**Maintenance mechanics** maintain and repair the grounds and buildings where controllers and systems specialists work. This requires detailed knowledge of specific trades such as carpentry, plumbing, and electrical.

**Management and Program Assistants and Aviation Safety Assistants** – maintain office records, office supplies, updates, logistics support and maintain data reports.

**Environmental Protection Specialists** – manage, supervise, or perform administrative or program work relating to environmental protection programs. They ensure compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

But this is, of course, not just about the work. It is about the people doing the work. Our friends, neighbors and relatives. People with families and responsibilities, some of whom are military veterans who served our country and want to continue doing so, some of whom have always dreamed of a job in aviation only to be pushed aside without consideration and told “DOT FAA finds, that based on your performance you have not demonstrated that your further employment at the DOT FAA would be in the public interest. For this reason, the DOT FAA is removing you from your position with DOT FAA and the federal civil service effective today.”<sup>8</sup> This notification didn’t come from the FAA, the DOT or even OPM. Nor was it signed by a supervisory figure. And it is patently untrue that the terminations were based on performance. Some of these employees were recruited for their expertise and were lured from other jobs based on their expertise and a “promise” of more stable employment.

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<sup>8</sup> “Notification of Termination During Probationary Period,” February 14, 2025.



PASS reached out to the employees impacted by these decisions and their responses are genuine and, in some cases, heartbreaking. For example:

*This will ruin us financially. There is no way to know what impact being fired for performance will have on future prospects, security clearances, etc.*

*I dedicated 14 years to military service before a service-connected injury prevented me from continuing my career. Serving my country was a deep passion, and I wanted to find a way to continue contributing. That's why I applied for a federal position with the FAA. I recognized the challenges they faced due to understaffing and saw an opportunity to support their mission—just as we always stepped up for our brothers and sisters in arms.*

*Once our savings is gone we don't even know if we can keep our house at this point. We are trying to figure out what we can sell to try and make payments and put food on the table. Imagine having your income cut in half with no notice.*

*I wanted to provide a service to my country . . . I wanted to achieve the American dream by working hard and building the best future for myself. I was optimistic that my country would treat me the same way I show love for it.*

*The verbiage used on my termination feels like an attack on my own character and fortified my own self-doubts. Even though my evaluation speaks different. Being told I'm fired due to my performance just makes me believe despite how hard I work at something I'll never be good enough to be successful in my goals.*

*I am a single income household with 2 children (1 year and 2 years old). My wife was recently diagnosed with a disability keeping her from working and my income is the only means to feed my family. This has devastated my family's ability to put food on the table.*

*I have been a civil servant for more than three years beginning in January 2022 as a contractor and eventually being picked up by management to become a federal employee in May 2024 and expanding on my existing role. I was just over three months away from completing my probationary period and I had a passing performance review with positive feedback from my direct supervisor. It is very distressing seeing civil servants being vilified in the public eye while air safety suffers from these reckless decisions.*

*I was my family's sole source of income. My husband had just left his full time job after years supporting us to pursue higher education. He has now had to drop out of college, and if we do not find income within the next month we could lose our home.*

These employees were devoted to their jobs and the safety critical mission of the FAA. This action will increase the workload for frontline aviation safety workers and place new responsibilities on a workforce that is already stretched thin. This decision did not consider the staffing needs of the FAA, which is already challenged by understaffing. Staffing decisions should be based on an individual agency's mission-critical needs. To do otherwise is dangerous when it comes to public safety.

## **AIR TRAFFIC SHOULD REMAIN A GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY**

As representatives of thousands of FAA employees, PASS must reiterate our opposition to the privatization of any of the functions or services within the FAA.

Ensuring that the men and women who perform this vital work remain federal employees is of fundamental importance in maintaining a safe and efficient NAS. These federal employees are extensively and specifically trained on a variety of interconnected, specialized systems and equipment in order to fulfill the responsibility of protecting aviation safety.

While proponents of privatization claim other countries have been successful, they fail to mention an important fact: any country that has attempted privatization has been working with a far smaller system and airspace. Simply stated, there is no comparison between our airspace and that in foreign countries and the United States should not be used as a test case.

Overhauling the entire aviation system by removing air traffic control from federal oversight and funding will be a serious setback for its development and growth. Our air traffic control system is a national public asset and PASS strongly believes it should remain in the public trust.

Once again, PASS appreciates the actions taken by members of this committee to communicate confidence in the federal workforce in their letter to Secretary Duffy. The letter concluded by reiterating opposition to any attempt to rescind authority from the FAA over the air traffic control system. “The FAA has the most skilled and proficient aerospace workforce in the world and any actions that threaten this workforce will only introduce unnecessary risk and consequences into the NAS.”<sup>9</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

The work of the highly trained and skilled employees represented by PASS is essential to protecting aviation safety and fulfilling the agency’s mission. PASS recognizes that having the appropriate and skilled workforce in place is essential to maintaining the safety of the system.

While there seems to be a drive to build things quickly, it should go without saying that making drastic changes to a system based on safety and effectiveness is neither safe nor effective. Blanket changes, indiscriminate dismissals or other arbitrary edicts will not help this country maintain the safest air traffic control system. This demoralizes the entire workforce and distracts from the agency’s efforts to modernize and improve the aviation system—as well as taking away from the primary mission of the FAA to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the U.S. aviation system and ultimately, the safety of the American flying public.

Of utmost importance, FAA employees who perform vital aviation safety work must remain federal employees, and that this is critical to a safe and efficient NAS. It is unfathomable—even

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<sup>9</sup> Letter from House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Rick Larsen and members of the committee to Department of Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy. February 14, 2025.

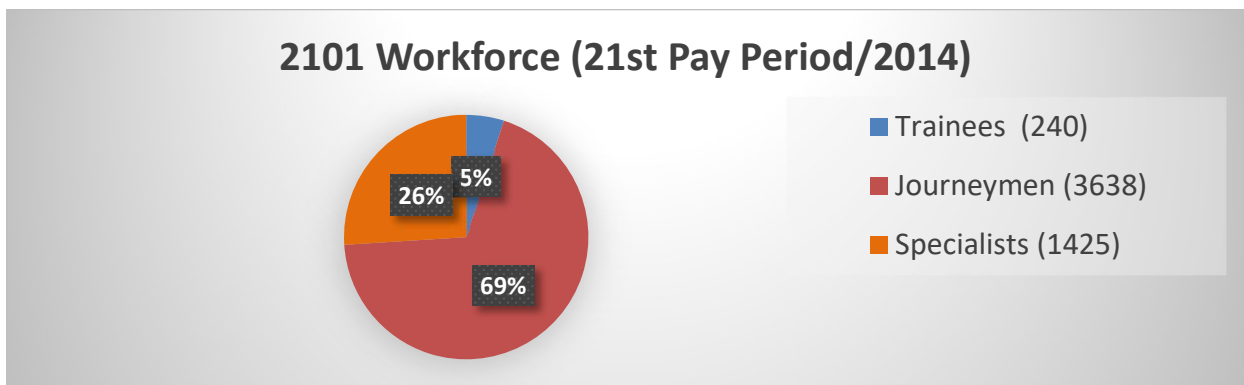
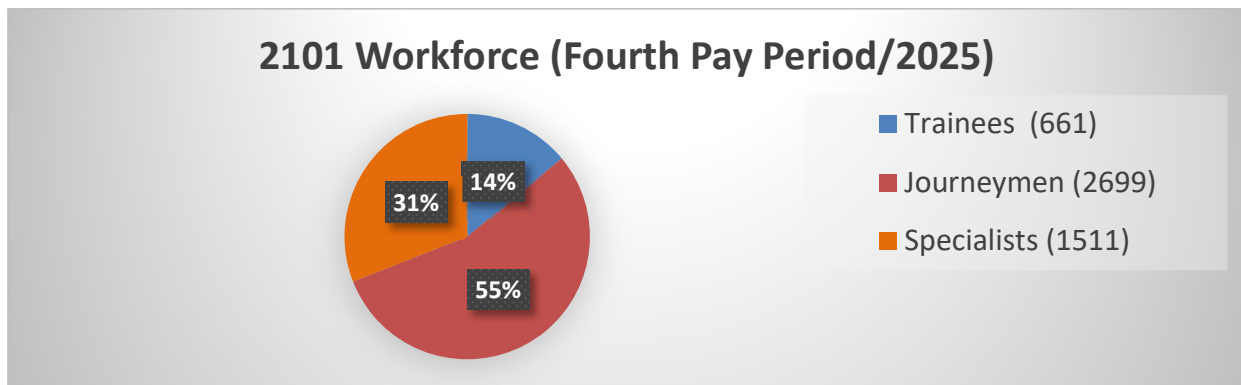
dangerous—to consider gambling with the future and safety of our air traffic control system through privatization. The FAA has the most skilled and proficient aerospace workforce in the world and any actions that threaten this workforce will only introduce unnecessary risk and consequences into the NAS. It is the lack of vision among the senior ranks of the agency that can be a barrier to modernization, not the dedication and expertise of the employees on the front lines.

PASS respectfully calls on this committee to consider our areas of concern and recognize the critical contributions made by the employees we represent. PASS is ready to work with you to ensure that the United States air traffic control system remains the safest aviation system in the world.

## ADDENDUM A TECHNICAL OPERATIONS WORKFORCE

The Technical Operations workforce at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has diminished to a level that may lead to crises regarding the maintenance, repair, and certification of the National Airspace System (NAS). According to the FAA, in October 2014, there were approximately 5,810<sup>10</sup> technical employees (consisting of occupational series 2101, 856, and 802). Since then, the numbers have steadily declined, to approximately 5,309,<sup>11</sup> the COVID-19 pandemic slowed training for these highly skilled employees. The 2101 occupational series makes up the bulk of the Technical Operations workforce.

The current staffing of 2101 employees (fourth pay period of 2025 sent to PASS from the agency) is as follows:



The workforce can be broadly defined in three categories. Apprentices, also known as trainees, or developmental employees are auxiliary to the workforce because they are still officially in developmental training. Journeymen have been recently certified but will continue years of “on-the-job training” to then specialize in skills and do the bulk of certification and restoration work on the NAS. However, there is no clear definition of progression for a journeyman. Lastly,

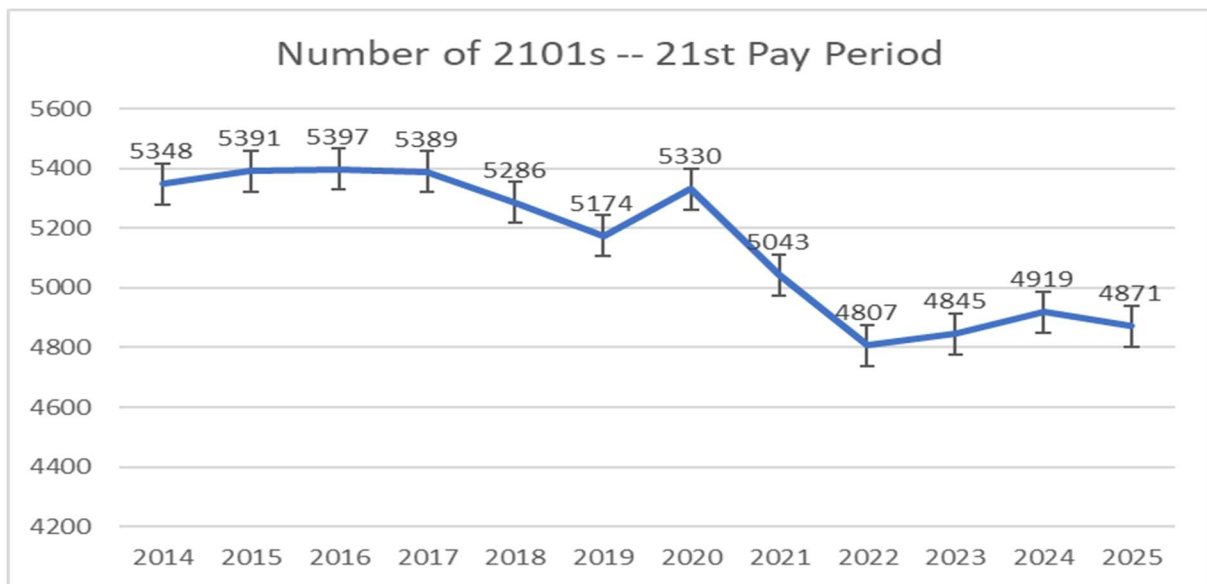
<sup>10</sup> FAA collective bargaining contract data, 21<sup>st</sup> pay period of 2014.

<sup>11</sup> FAA collective bargaining contract data, fourth pay period of 2025.

specialists have been working in their field for a significant time and are experts in their given skill or subject area.

The data indicates a significant decrease of 939 journeymen in the workforce, accounting for most of the attrition among 2101 employees. Meanwhile, the percentage of trainees has nearly tripled since 2014. To address this, trainees must be certified more efficiently and integrated into the journeyman workforce promptly.

This issue is further compounded by the slowdown in training caused by the pandemic, resulting in an unacceptably high percentage of trainees. As a result, journeymen are left to shoulder much of the workload, creating a workforce that is understaffed, insufficiently trained, and overburdened.



<sup>12</sup>

The FAA should collaborate with PASS to establish long-term staffing goals through a comprehensive Workforce Plan. Relying solely on a Technical Operations staffing model based on the current workforce overlooks the anticipated growth of the NAS driven by NextGen technologies. Additionally, it fails to fully leverage the specialized skills and expertise of this highly technical group of employees.

2101 Workforce				
AGE	➤ 55	➤ 60	➤ 62	➤ 65
NUMBER	1668	944	683	317
%	34%	19%	14%	7%

**Recommendation:** The FAA needs to engage with PASS to create long-term staffing goals through a workforce plan, as it has for controllers and safety inspectors. Simply developing a

<sup>12</sup> 2025 represents the fourth pay period of 2025, not the 21<sup>st</sup>.

Technical Operations staffing model based on the current workforce does not consider retirements or the growth of the NAS through Next Generation Air Transportation Systems (NextGen) technologies nor does it take advantage of the skills and abilities of this highly technical group of employees.