

For Immediate Release
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PASS ENCOURAGED BY BIPARTISAN SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE LETTER OPPOSING ATC PRIVATIZATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS), the union that represents over 11,000 employees at the Federal Aviation Administration, including Technical Operations employees in the Air Traffic Organization (ATO), applauded a February 28 letter from Senate Appropriations Committee leaders that rejected plans for privatizing the U.S. air traffic control system. The letter was sent by Appropriations Committee Chair Thad Cochran (R-Miss.), Appropriations Committee Vice Chair Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Transportation Subcommittee Chair Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Transportation Subcommittee Ranking Member Jack Reed (D-R.I.) to Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Chair John Thune (R-S.D.) and Ranking Member Bill Nelson (D-Fla.).

“PASS thanks the Senate leaders for expressing their opposition to any plans to privatize this country’s aviation system and remove responsibility for its operation and maintenance away from the federal government and over to a private corporation,” said PASS National President Mike Perrone. “FAA employees represented by PASS work every day to ensure the safety and efficiency of the U.S. aviation system, the largest and most complex aviation system in the world, and they should continue to be allowed to perform their work as federal employees.”

In the letter, the senators praised the progress the FAA has made in modernizing the aviation system through the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) and acknowledged the related cost-saving benefits. The senators recognized the job the FAA and stakeholders have done to advance the system and warned about separating the FAA from the government at such a critical point. “This NextGen progress is due to the FAA and aviation stakeholders working collaboratively on advancing the needs of the airline industry, while balancing the complex needs of the entire aviation community,” stated the letter. “If air traffic control were separated during this critical period of technological advancement, the progress already being made to synchronize investment from government and industry related to safety, equipage, training, operational changes, and overall integration would be lost. It does not appear to make sense to break apart the FAA, an essential part of our success in aviation.”

The letter continued by stressing that the public would not be well-served by removing any part of the FAA from congressional oversight and the appropriations process, which ensures oversight of agency resources and accountability. The senators acknowledged that the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee would be working on FAA reauthorization in the near future and asked them to ensure the next authorization supports aviation safety without breaking apart the FAA.

“PASS will continue working with members of Congress to ensure operation and management of the U.S. aviation system remain a function of the federal government and the responsibility of the federal employees at the FAA,” said Perrone. “The United States has the safest, most complex aviation system in the world. Any changes to that system would no doubt interrupt important progress and the modernization efforts that are currently being made and those planned for the future. The letter from the Senate Appropriations Committee makes the commonsense observation that privatization will harm modernization, not help it.”

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