

OPPOSE ATC PRIVATIZATION TALKING POINTS

- As a Federal Aviation Administration employee and member of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (PASS), I am greatly concerned by any proposal that privatizes the air traffic control system by turning the Air Traffic Organization (ATO) into a private corporation. Specifically, the FAA reauthorization legislation introduced by House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Bill Shuster last year.
- The United States has the safest, largest and most complex aviation system in the world and it should continue to be operated safely by public employees for the public's benefit. Federal employees like me are dedicated public servants who work hard to ensure that the National Airspace System is safe and efficient for you and your constituents. We are dedicated to safety and protecting the flying public every day, on every flight.
- Currently, congressional oversight helps ensure that your constituents, the flying public, have a voice when it comes to aviation-related issues. This open line of communication has been pivotal to the success of our system. Oversight of the system in a privatized model is a definite issue. Unlike Congress, the board of directors will have no oversight—they will only be answering to themselves. They will dictate everything from funding to staffing to modernization efforts. No one is there to stop the corporation from making decisions that are not in the best interest of our country.
- I understand that funding of the aviation system is an issue, and I agree that it must be addressed. Sequestration, continuing resolutions and other funding problems must be resolved. However, this does not require a total overhaul of the system. It does not mean turning over billions of dollars of taxpayer property, along with the responsibility for the safe maintenance and modernization of the air traffic control system, to a private corporation, making the system vulnerable to economic uncertainties. In the case of an economic downturn, I am concerned that I may lose my job and important aviation system facilities may be shut down. Furthermore, this scenario opens the door to the possibility that the government may have to bail out the aviation system.
- Our aviation system is not broken. Now is not the time to start over. We have made significant progress in modernizing aviation system through the Next Generation Air Transportation System, or NextGen. Our achievements include modernizing air traffic management through the En Route Automation Modernization program; improving the way we communicate with aircraft through Data Communications; and growing our airspace while increasing efficiency through Performance-Based Navigation (PBN) initiatives for Metroplexes and general aviation airports across the country. Privatizing the system threatens NextGen, introducing uncertainties into its future and, at the very least, bringing modernization to a standstill during transition to the new corporation.
- The most important steps we can take are to continue with our modernization efforts, to grow our airspace and allow for the introduction of new technologies, all while ensuring the interests and safety of the flying public. This important work is best led every step of the way by a cohesive group of federal employees.

- As an FAA employee, I know the importance of having all units of the agency working together. Timely communication and shared resources are critical. I am concerned with what happens to that essential communication and daily interaction if part of the FAA is stripped away. In my opinion, this is too risky of a gamble to take.
- Separating air traffic services from the federal government also adds an additional layer of bureaucracy when it comes to sharing critical information with other federal agencies. Keeping air traffic services within the federal government allows these agencies to communicate quickly and efficiently in the case of a national disaster.
- The language in Shuster's bill also allows for the corporation to contract out air traffic services. This is not how the aviation system should function in this country. It's basically taking something that was once put into place for the American people and turning it over to layers of corporate interests.
- Finally, as a federal employee, I'm concerned that Shuster's bill considerably weakens labor laws for employees of the corporation. Employees are not guaranteed access to a grievance process, whistleblower protections are severely cut, union elections are altered, and a hybrid pay and benefit system is introduced in which new employees will be covered by a different system than those who transfer from the FAA.
- FAA employees are federal employees. We work for the American people. Our work should not be privatized. We cannot gamble with the U.S. aviation system.