

OPPOSE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL PRIVATIZATION TALKING POINTS

- As a Federal Aviation Administration employee and member of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, I am opposed to any proposal that privatizes the air traffic control system; specifically, the FAA reauthorization legislation (H.R.2997) recently passed by the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. FAA employees are civil servants who work for the American people. Privatizing this work would gamble with the safety of the U.S. aviation system.
- The United States has the safest, largest and most complex aviation system in the world and it should continue to be operated by public employees for the public's benefit. Federal employees like me are dedicated and expertly skilled, and our only duty is to ensure safety and protect the flying public every day, on every flight.
- Our airspace is a public good that belongs to the American people. 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.
- Simply put, our aviation system is not broken. We are making significant progress in modernization through the Next Generation Air Transportation System, or NextGen. Privatizing the system threatens NextGen, introducing uncertainties into its future, and would bring modernization to a standstill during a lengthy transition to the new corporation with no guarantee of success.
- Under H.R.2997, the private air traffic control entity would be entirely funded by an unknown user fee scheme, which would be determined by a board of directors dominated by special interests.
- Privatization is a dangerous and risky proposition. It introduces significant funding uncertainty for the air traffic control system and creates a corporation vulnerable to economic instability and truly too big to fail. The plan turns over billions of dollars of taxpayer property, including responsibility for safe air traffic control system maintenance and modernization, to a new private entity that does not exist today. Such an undertaking would involve nothing less than a total overhaul of the aviation system.
- Today, in the event of a national emergency or natural disaster, the FAA and the Department of Defense protect the National Airspace System in tandem by sharing airspace, training systems, assets, equipment and information. This is made possible by their mutual status as federal agencies within the U.S. government. Privatization would sever this relationship.
- I know firsthand that timely communication, collaboration and shared resources are critical to success at the FAA. 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 a gamble too risky to take.
- Finally, as a federal employee, I'm concerned that the legislation won't fully protect my workplace rights. It claims that existing labor agreements will be honored, but offers no supporting details. Moving over 30,000 employees from the federal sector to the private sector will be no easy task—and it is a task that I believe should not be a consideration for this country and our unparalleled air traffic control system.