

— *Fallon Roth*

Nov. 6, 12:01 p.m. ET



'We fully expect disruption': No major issues at PHL ahead of planned flight cuts



(From left) Aviation safety specialists Ezekiel Conover, Lane Conley, and Chris Borgia at PHL Thursday. They haven't been paid since September.

Brett Sholtis / Staff

As travelers at Philadelphia International Airport kissed their loved ones goodbye and rolled their luggage to check in Thursday, several said their flights haven't been changed due to the reductions.

But frequent flyer Virginia Nunn — on her way home to Tampa after visiting family in Philly — doesn't expect it to stay that way for long. She and her husband have a trip to Las Vegas booked for next week.

“We fully expect disruption,” said Nunn.

The self-described registered Democrat who is “just a tick to the right of center” politically said that if President Donald Trump's administration was looking to inflict pain on people, gumming up air travel was a great way to do it.

Nunn said she hoped Democrats and Republicans would come to a compromise now that the election has passed.

“We are at a very polarized point in our history,” Nunn said. “We’ve got to have the center of our country say, ‘enough.’”

Outside the airport, three airlines systems specialists held up signs calling on the government to end the shutdown.

Their jobs involve maintaining and certifying equipment used by air traffic controllers, said Chris Borgia.

The job pays pretty well, too — \$70,000 to \$100,000 per year, he said. But due to the shutdown, none of them has been paid since the end of September.

“It’s just stressful,” said Borgia. He said he just bought a house in August, and now he’s watching his savings dwindle as he makes mortgage payments without any cash coming in.

Aviation safety is a high-demand, niche field that employs a lot of people who were trained while serving in the military, said Lane Conley, who had served in the Air Force, as did Borgia.

Because of the shutdown, people who may pursue this work are going elsewhere instead, Conley said.

And those who did take these jobs recently have been unable to get their needed certifications at “FAA Academy” in Oklahoma, Conley said.

That, combined with the missing paychecks, is putting a lot of pressure on the workers.

“We have one guy saying he can’t stay here much longer,” said Conley.

— *Brett Sholtis*