

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 15, 2005

The Honorable Christopher Bond
Chairman
Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary,
Housing and Urban Development, and
Related Agencies Appropriations
Subcommittee
130 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Joe Knollenberg
Chairman
Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary,
Housing and Urban Development, and
District of Columbia Appropriations
Subcommittee
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary,
Housing and Urban Development, and
Related Agencies Appropriations
Subcommittee
128 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John W. Olver
Ranking Member
Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary,
Housing and Urban Development, and
District of Columbia Appropriations
Subcommittee
2358 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

We are writing to request that the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary, Housing and Urban Development, and D.C. Appropriations bill include language to address the proposed outsourcing of our nation's Flight Service Stations.

On February 1, 2005, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced that operations conducted by Flight Service Stations would be performed by a private contractor. This contractor will eliminate 38 of the 58 stations across the country, and will consolidate Flight Service Station responsibilities at the remaining 20 stations.

General aviation pilots depend on Flight Service Stations to provide weather briefings, temporary flight restrictions, emergency information, and aid in search and rescue. Flight Service Station Specialists use their expertise of regional weather, landscape, and flight conditions to ensure pilots reach their destinations safely. Their work has kept general aviation running smoothly and has literally saved lives.

The Federal Aviation Administration's proposal to privatize Flight Service Stations could lead to decreased safety for pilots of small planes because they will no longer be talking to personnel familiar with regional weather and topography. The consolidated system will strain service capability because fewer employees will be responsible for a growing system of general air traffic.

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On June 30, 2005, the House of Representatives approved an amendment to the FY 2006 Transportation Appropriations bill, by an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 238 to 177, to prohibit the FAA from implementing the privatization plan. It is our hope that the conference committee will agree that this amendment should be included in the final FY 2006 Transportation Appropriations bill.

In the absence of including this provision in the final bill, we request that the conference retain the Senate amendment providing that Flight Service Station employees within two years of full federal retirement can complete their service as government employees. While this will not help all employees, it will aid those close to retirement in retaining their promised retirement benefits.

As the conference committee continues to work to finalize the FY 2006 Transportation, Treasury, Judiciary, Housing and Urban Development, and D.C. Appropriations bill, we request that the committee include these provisions. We appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


James Johnson



Susan M. Collins


Debbie Steneow


Ted Kennedy


Mack Dayton


Carl Levin


Tom F. Kelly


Chris Dodd


Jon Kyl


John McCain


Frank R. Lautenberg


John Warner