

September 30, 2005

The Honorable Marion Blakey
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Blakey:

We are writing to urge the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) delay implementation of plans to turn functions of Flight Service Stations over to a private company until Congress completes the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006 appropriations process. As FY 2005 comes to a close, it is important that any funds used to implement the privatization plan are directly appropriated by Congress.

The House of Representatives has already weighed in against privatizing Flight Service Station operations through the FY 2006 Transportation Appropriations Bill. On June 30, 2005, the House of Representatives rejected the FAA's proposal by approving an amendment, by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 238 to 177, to prohibit the FAA from spending funds on the privatization plan. The Senate has yet to consider the FY 2006 Transportation Appropriations Bill.

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 will 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.

The proposed plan will be especially harmful to rural areas that more heavily rely upon smaller aircraft. Whether moving products and services as part of the global economy, or shepherding sick patients for medical care, communities require a basic air infrastructure network. By ensuring that Flight Service Stations can continue to serve all areas, general aviation pilots will continue to be able to serve regions that may otherwise not have service.

Accordingly, we request that the FAA delay implementation of plans to turn Flight Service Stations functions over to a private company until Congress finalizes the FY 2006 budget. While the FAA intends to shift these government employees over to

private control as soon as October 2005, it is important that this transition is not implemented until the Senate can consider the privatization of Flight Service Stations.

According to the FAA Director of Competitive Sourcing, the net cost of stopping this transition prior to October 1 would be approximately \$5 million. If the FAA proceeds on October 3 and is subsequently directed by Congress to suspend or reverse implementation, it could mean significant additional expenses to the FAA. For these reasons, we request that you delay the implementation of this transition until the bill is signed into law. Your prompt action on this request is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Herseth
Member of Congress

Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress

John Hostettler
Member of Congress

James Oberstar
Member of Congress

Mike Rogers (AL)
Member of Congress

Dan Boren
Member of Congress

Frank LoBiondo
Member of Congress

Rosa DeLauro
Member of Congress

Christopher Shays
Member of Congress

Carolyn Kilpatrick
Member of Congress

Tom Latham
Member of Congress

Ben Chandler
Member of Congress

K. Michael Conaway
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Dennis Kucinich
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Barbara Cubin
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Marion Berry
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Rob Simmons
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John Tanner
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Michael Turner
Member of Congress

Madeleine Bordallo
Member of Congress

Michael Simpson
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone
Member of Congress

Nancy Johnson
Member of Congress

Gary Ackerman
Member of Congress

Phil English
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

Carolyn McCarthy
Member of Congress

Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress

Timothy Bishop
Member of Congress

Michael Michaud
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Raul Grijalva
Member of Congress

John Larson
Member of Congress

Donald Payne
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Steve Israel
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Stephen Lynch
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Eliot Engel
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Jim McDermott
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Mark Udall
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Hilda Solis
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Tom Lantos
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Jim Matheson
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Tim Ryan
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Janice Schakowsky
Member of Congress

William Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

Linda Sanchez
Member of Congress

Robert Brady
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Collin Peterson
Member of Congress

Michael Honda
Member of Congress

Robert Menendez
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

Howard Berman
Member of Congress

Tom Allen
Member of Congress

Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress

Nick Rahall
Member of Congress