

## Democratic Wins FAA REAUTHORIZATION OF 2024

# The Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2024

### Topline Democratic Message:

- The *Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024* is a bipartisan, bicameral compromise done in good faith to protect the safety of the flying public.
- It will maintain American leadership in aviation safety and aerospace innovation, strengthen and diversify the U.S. aviation workforce, make groundbreaking investments in sustainability and resiliency, and improve consumer protections and accessibility.

### Maintaining America's Gold Standard in Safety:

- Preserves the existing federal age and flight-hour requirements for U.S. commercial pilots.
- Prevents runway incursions by expanding ground surveillance and detection equipment at large and medium hub airports to better inform air traffic controllers of potential dangers.
- Ensures foreign aircraft repair stations are subject to the same standards as U.S. repair stations.
- Holds organization designation authority (ODA) unit members accountable to a higher standard by requiring ethics training.
- Reviews and updates passenger air carriers' emergency medical kits to ensure they include overdose reversal medications, Epi-pens, updated defibrillators and more, and reviews the required training for flight crew to use such equipment.
- Reassesses federal evacuation standards for commercial aircraft.
- Requires 25-hour cockpit voice recorders (CVRs) while protecting flight crew privacy and prohibits the CVRs from being deliberately erased or tampered with after events requiring NTSB follow-up.
- Initiates a ramp worker safety Call to Action to convene stakeholders on best practices and implements actions to address airport worker safety and ways to minimize or eliminate ingestion zone and jet blast zone accidents.
- Studies how to reduce the harm of turbulence, radiation exposure, and extreme temperatures on passengers and flight crews, and requires, if appropriate, a rulemaking to address cabin fumes.
- Requires the FAA to convene a rulemaking committee and issue requirements for retrofitting secondary barriers on certain aircraft.
- Requires the FAA to increase safety regulations for commercial air tours and sport parachute operations based on recommendations from a rulemaking committee and requires air tour operators to get FAA approval before conducting tours with a removed or modified door.
- Ensures that flight crew have accommodations whenever they seek to enroll and participate in self-defense training;
- Convenes an FAA task force to develop recommendations to help prevent assaults against airline personnel and emphasizes that airlines should have employee assault prevention and response plans; and requires passenger air carriers to issue, in consultation with labor unions, formal policies on addressing sexual assault or harassment incidents.

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#### **Fostering Innovation:**

- Requires the FAA to establish regulations that would allow unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) to safely operate beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS), providing regulatory certainty to this innovative sector.
- Creates a grant program to support the use of UAS when inspecting, repairing, or constructing critical infrastructure. It also establishes a grant program to fund workforce training for UAS careers.
- Directs the FAA to coordinate with other federal agencies and contractors to develop a plan to use drones for wildfire detection, mitigation, and suppression efforts, and adds an FAA liaison to the National Interagency Fire Center.
- Reauthorizes and strengthens the role of the FAA's UAS Test Sites to facilitate safe testing of new aviation technologies.
- Requires the FAA to finalize rulemaking on the certification requirements, operating rules, and pilot training for powered-lift advanced air mobility (AAM) aircraft.
- Extends an FAA pilot grant program for state and local governments to plan for the deployment of AAM operations.
- Creates a new Unmanned and Autonomous Flight Advisory Committee to advise the FAA on future technology advancements, which will consist of representatives from industry, community advocates and labor unions.
- Establishes a Center for Advanced Aviation Technologies to support the testing and advancement of new and emerging aviation technologies.
- Ensures that the important voices of local communities and current airspace users are heard as new entrants emerge in U.S. skies.

#### **Strengthening and Diversifying the U.S. Aviation Workforce:**

- Significantly increases funding for the FAA's aviation workforce development grants to \$60 million, to strengthen our talent pipeline of pilots, aviation maintenance technical workers, and aviation manufacturing workers. It also transitions these grants to a new Cooperative Aviation Recruitment, Enrichment, and Employment Readiness (CAREER) grant program, with broader eligibilities to promote workforce development opportunities.
- Sets aside 20 percent of the total \$60 million in funds for the Willa Brown Aviation Education Program to support outreach and educational opportunities in low-income communities.
- Encourages the FAA to continue its outreach and engagement with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) to promote awareness of educational and career opportunities. It also directs the FAA to continue the operation of the MSI Internship Program.
- Directs FAA to hire the maximum amount of air traffic controllers from the FAA training academy, directs the Transportation Research Board to identify the most appropriate staffing model for future air traffic controller workforce needs, and requires the FAA to adopt this model. In the interim, requires the FAA to adopt the staffing methodologies developed by the Collaborative Resource Workgroup (a joint FAA and labor entity).
- Requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study to assess our airport service workforce and examine its role and importance to the overall aviation economy.

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- Allows DOT to provide grants for technical assistance and training to Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) to help them compete on projects.
- Creates the Bessie Coleman Women in Aviation Advisory Committee to advise on the recruitment, retention, education, and treatment of women in U.S. aviation.
- Directs FAA to coordinate with the Department of Defense to improve the career transition between the military and civilian workforces.
- Creates an FAA working group to assess and revise the agency's medical processes. It also establishes a task force to oversee and advise on the FAA's efforts to support the mental health of the aviation workforce.
- Directs FAA to issue guidance to commercial airlines on crewmembers pumping during noncritical phases of flight.

#### **Expanding Consumer Protections and Accessibility:**

- Requires airlines to refund passengers with nonrefundable flights when their flight is cancelled, significantly delayed, or changed if they choose not to fly on the delayed or changed flight.
- Directs DOT to require airlines to develop policies addressing reimbursement for passengers for hotel and meal costs when a flight is cancelled or significantly delayed.
- Directs DOT to establish regulations requiring airlines to allow passengers to sit next to their young child to the greatest extent practical at no additional cost.
- Reauthorizes the Air Carrier Access Act Advisory Committee to advise on improving the accessibility of air travel.
- Directs DOT to improve airline personnel and contractor training standards on assisting passengers with disabilities using wheelchairs with boarding and deplaning and stowing wheelchairs and mobility aids.
- Requires airlines to publish the dimensions of their cargo holds and refund passengers who book flights on planes that cannot accommodate their mobility devices.
- Directs DOT to create a roadmap for airlines to reduce damage to wheelchairs and mobility aids and better accommodate wheelchairs onboard aircraft.
- Establishes a known service animal travel pilot program to allow approved service animals to be exempt from the required air travel documentation. It also requires DOT to publish on the Department's website a list of accredited programs that train service animals and authorized registrars that evaluate service animals.
- Creates a pilot program that allows Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funds to be used for capital projects that improve airport accessibility.
- Authorizes the FAA to lead research to improve airplane accessibility and requires DOT to provide Congress with more detailed information on disability-related complaints and recommendations to address safety challenges for these passengers.
- Triples civil penalties for violations of consumer aviation laws and regulations.

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#### **Promoting Environmental Sustainability and Resilience:**

- Requires semi-annual progress reports to Congress on the transition away from per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) foam and establishes a \$350 million reimbursement program for airport sponsors to replace PFAS foam and equipment.
- Expands how AIP funding can be deployed and increases funding from \$3.35 billion to \$4 billion annually:
  - Allows airports to use existing AIP funding for hydrogen and unleaded fuel infrastructure.
  - Allows airports to use AIP funding for airport environmental resiliency projects.
  - Creates a minimum level of funding of \$150 million annually for airport noise and environmental programs within the AIP Discretionary program.
- Creates a new discretionary airport grant program with up to \$200 million per fiscal year to fund airport resilience and runway safety projects.
- Expands the FAA's Voluntary Airport Low Emission (VALE) program to all commercial airports and streamlines eligibility requirements to help improve airport air quality.
- Requires the FAA to develop a plan to ensure general aviation aircraft can transition away from leaded fuels by 2030.
- Makes considerable efforts to mitigate the impacts of aviation noise on local communities, including:
  - Directing FAA to review and revise airport noise compatibility requirements, and to seek feedback from neighboring airport communities.
  - Requiring FAA to take certain actions to reduce undesirable aircraft noise when implementing or revising a flight procedure.
  - Establishing an Aircraft Noise Advisory Committee to give communities a voice on federal noise policy changes.
  - Creating an FAA Community Collaboration Program to harmonize FAA policies and procedures on community engagement, including on aviation noise.
  - Allowing passenger facility charge (PFC) revenue to be used for noise barrier projects at small hub airports.