



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives

Bill Shuster
Chairman

Washington, DC 20515

Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member

Christopher P. Bertram, Staff Director

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Katherine W. Dedrick, Democratic Staff Director

Dear Democratic Colleague:

Last week, some former officials who served in the Clinton Administration wrote a letter to Congress outlining their support for air traffic control system reform. Unfortunately, the group, made serious omissions in its arguments and conflated key facts that will make a big difference as the House prepares to consider H.R. 4441, the “Aviation Innovation, Reform, and Reauthorization Act of 2016” (AIRR Act), legislation that includes a controversial plan to privatize our nation’s air traffic control system. We are writing today to set the record straight with regard to this ill-advised and costly plan.

Claim: Numerous expert panels and studies have recommended “corporatization” of air traffic control, and both Democratic and Republican Administrations have proposed it in the past.

Fact: The AIRR Act does not create a government corporation as recommended by prior panels. Rather, the AIRR Act creates a private corporation to run the Nation’s air traffic control system. The group notes it participated in exploratory efforts by President Clinton and Vice President Gore to transition the air traffic control system to a government-owned, government-controlled, government-operated corporation. The corporation created under the AIRR Act is unrecognizable when compared to what President Clinton and Vice President Gore considered. **In fact, toward the end of his administration, President Clinton even signed an executive order reaffirming that air traffic control services are “an inherently governmental function”¹.**

Claim: More than 60 countries have “corporatized” air traffic control.

Fact: Only two countries in the world have fully privatized their air traffic control systems. The nations that have “corporatized” air traffic control have created a government corporation to oversee air traffic control. In contrast, the AIRR Act engages in a science experiment by fully privatizing air traffic control – a structure adopted by only two countries, one of which (the United Kingdom) was forced to bail out its private air traffic control provider in the post-9/11 economic crisis.

¹ *Air Traffic Performance-Based Organization*, Executive Order 13180 (Dec. 7, 2000), rptd. in 65 Fed. Reg. 77493 (Dec. 11, 2000).

Claim: Democrats and Republicans alike have long advocated for air traffic control reform.

Fact: No plan to privatize the U.S. air traffic control system has ever been seriously considered, much less attracted bipartisan support. So it's no surprise that the AIRR Act does not have bipartisan support either. In fact, during the Committee markup of the bill, all Democrats and two Republicans voted against the bill because it privatized air traffic control. The bill gives a private corporation an unprecedented power to tax American consumers to pay for the system and hands over Federal technologies, equipment, and even real estate to a private corporation for free. It's no wonder the AIRR Act cannot win bipartisan support.

The Senate is moving forward with a bipartisan bill that does not include air traffic control privatization. This legislation is expected to be approved by the full Senate this week. Aside from the AIRR Act's controversial poison-pill title to privatize air traffic control, the AIRR Act includes numerous bipartisan provisions that improve safety, enhance the air travel experience, safely integrate drones into the Nation's airspace, reform critical aircraft and equipment certification programs, and provide stable aviation program funding. So does the Senate bill. If we want to make sure these improvements are enacted into law this year (and before the busy summer travel season), it is time to abandon this controversial privatization plan and move forward on the bipartisan aviation reforms that will maintain our position as the world leader in civil aviation.

Please contact us or Alex Burkett, Democratic Counsel for the Subcommittee on Aviation (ext. 5-9161), should you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



PETER DeFAZIO
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure



RICK LARSEN
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Aviation