

GOVERNMENT MANAGERS COALITION

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July 24, 2017

Dear Representative,

The Government Managers Coalition represents over 200,000 executives and managers across the federal government, and we write to oppose H.R. 2997, the 21st Century Aviation Innovation, Reform, and Reauthorization Act (21st Century AIRR Act). H.R. 2997 would involve a chaotic, costly and needless multi-year transition resulting in delays in equipment modernization. The FAA is in the midst of transitioning to a variety of new air traffic technologies under a program known as the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen). Many of these programs are being deployed ahead of schedule and are saving airlines millions of dollars, reducing delays, and most importantly, increasing safety of flight for every American. This progress will be slowed significantly if the Air Traffic Control (ATC) system is privatized as deployments are delayed and contracts are renegotiated.

Air Traffic Control is inherently governmental. This vital function, which is essential to our economic and national security, should not be placed in the hands of a private corporation that will be dominated by the airlines and unions. Proponents of privatization often point to NAV CANADA, the privatized ATC system in Canada, as inspiration for their proposal. The Canadian ATC system is one tenth the size of the U.S. system, and is not comparable because of the lack of airspace complexity. A significant portion of the traffic handled by NAV CANADA never lands in Canada, but simply overflies Canadian airspace without the complexities of take-offs and landings.

Congressional oversight of the FAA will be eliminated by shifting the ATC system to a corporate model. Strong oversight by the Appropriations and Authorizing Committees currently ensures that all ATC users are treated fairly. The airlines and their trade association have spent millions of dollars pushing for privatization because they want to take control of the ATC system to lower costs for themselves and to make their operations a priority over all others, which has been the case in a number of other countries' privatized systems.

Privatization is also unnecessary for continued modernization of the air traffic control system. Despite the airline trade group's narrative, FAA is not responsible for most delays. The Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation statistics shows that the airlines themselves are responsible for the majority of delays, citing here, "In 2015, airline caused delays totaled 20.2 million minutes... 2.7 million more than all other categories monitored by DoT."¹ The airlines continually aggravate delay problems by scheduling more flights per hour than an airport can safely accommodate on existing runways.

Finally, transferring all of the FAA's ATC assets to the private corporation, including valuable frequency spectrum, would be a windfall for the new corporation costing taxpayers billions of dollars at a time when our country is facing mounting deficits. NAV CANADA paid for the ATC assets it received from the Canadian Government; yet, H.R. 2997 would give our ATC assets away to the airlines, which are enjoying record profits.

We urge you to vote "No" when H.R. 2997 comes to the floor.

Sincerely,

Andy Taylor, President, FAA Managers Association
Renee Johnson, President, Federal Managers Association
Thomas Burger, Executive Director, Professional Managers Association
Chris Detzler, President, National Council of Social Security Management Associations
Bill Valdez, President, Senior Executives Association

¹ "The Weather Isn't the Biggest Cause of U.S. Flight Delays" By Alan Levin and Michael Sasso
August 23, 2016, Bloomberg: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-23/blame-the-airlines-not-the-weather-for-most-u-s-flight-delays>