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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

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February 1, 2016

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Minority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Leader McCarthy, Leader Pelosi, and Mr. Hoyer:

As the House of Representatives considers reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), we write to inform you we will not support legislation that would create a separate air traffic control organization outside the FAA and removed from the annual appropriations process. The annual oversight and funding role of Congress is critical to providing individual citizens and communities a voice, through their elected representatives, in the operation of our nation's air traffic system.

The United States has the largest, most complex air traffic system in the world, with a record level of safety. Congress plays a key role in providing oversight for the FAA to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the air traffic control system in the national interest. We are responsible not just to safeguard the day-to-day operations of air traffic, but also to ensure that our communities – urban, suburban, and rural – have fair and equitable access to air service.


We do not believe that creating a separate air traffic entity, removed from congressional oversight, will advance efforts to modernize air traffic control. The Committee on Appropriations has a proven record of providing robust funding to advance air traffic technologies in the national interest. While FAA can and should improve and accelerate the development of modernized air traffic systems, we do not believe the solution is less oversight and less accountability.

Further, we have concerns about any proposal that would transfer all decisions on financial investments and fees – on airlines and the public – to an independent entity that is not accountable to the people we serve. This would be an abdication of our duties to the American people as Members of Congress.

Finally, there are unique national security interests for our airspace that could suffer from reduced congressional oversight. If the air traffic control system were governed by a new and separate entity, we would have serious concerns about the chain of command in a national emergency and the ability of our defense and law enforcement agencies to have unfettered access to the national airspace.

We applaud any legislative effort to reform the FAA so that it can more quickly and efficiently modernize air traffic systems, better serve the public, and serve as a more effective partner with the U.S. aerospace industry. We cannot, however, support legislation that places air traffic control functions on autopilot and limits the ability of Congress to provide the annual oversight of our air traffic control system that our citizens and our communities deserve.


Sincerely,




Harold Rogers, Chairman
Committee on Appropriations



Nita Lowey, Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations



Mario Diaz-Balart, Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations



David Price, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations