

STATEMENT OF  
THE HONORABLE JERRY F. COSTELLO  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION  
HEARING ON  
THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION'S AGING AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL FACILITIES:  
INVESTIGATING THE NEED TO IMPROVE FACILITIES AND WORKER CONDITIONS  
JULY 24, 2007

- I want to welcome everyone to our Subcommittee hearing on Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) aging ATC facilities and the need to improve facilities and worker conditions.
  
- The FAA provides air traffic control services at over 400 Agency-operated air traffic control facilities throughout the Nation. Many of these facilities are over 40 years old, exceeding their useful life expectancy and not meeting current operational requirements. This has resulted in a General Services Administration Facility Condition Index of "fair to poor."

- Further, this Subcommittee and other interested stakeholders, like NATCA and PASS, have expressed concerns as to whether FAA has adequately funded the much-needed facility repairs and improvements, given the Agency's capital account has remained flat over the past several years.
  
- The Administration consistently proposes a level of F&E funding well below the authorized level. In 2003, the FAA requested and received from Congress an authorization of approximately \$3 billion per year for its capital program. Yet, for the past three years the Administration has requested roughly \$2.5 billion per year for its F&E capital program.
  
- The FY08 budget is no exception -- the Administration is once again requesting \$2.46 billion for capital spending.

- According to the Capital Investment Plan (CIP) estimates, approximately half of the F&E budget is set aside for equipment and modernization. Yet, the FAA has not requested additional F&E funding for routine maintenance and repair of aging FAA facilities.
  
- I have said time and again that we cannot put the cart before the horse when it comes to modernization – while the FAA continues to lay the groundwork for modernization, it must also ensure that the current system can continue to operate in a safe and reliable way by properly investing in the maintenance and upkeep of existing infrastructure. The FAA must also provide safe, healthy working conditions for its employees.

- That is why in HR 2881, the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2007*, we provide historic funding levels for the FAA's capital programs, including nearly \$13 billion for F&E – over \$1 billion more than the Administration's proposal.
  
- I am disturbed by the employee accounts of excessive, unhealthy levels of mold and asbestos; leaking roofs and other infrastructure issues; insufficient ventilation; and improperly housed equipment.
  
- Both PASS and NATCA report that the FAA is in direct violation of safety regulations, including those mandated by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.
  
- To illustrate this point, please take a look at a video clip from the Grand Rapids Tower.

➤ **[Pause for clip]**

➤ Again, it is alarming and disturbing that we allow our facilities to deteriorate to this extent. No one should have to work in these conditions -- it is unacceptable. I am interested in our FAA witnesses' response to that clip.

➤ I question whether the FAA has a comprehensive strategy to effectively manage the replacement, repair, and modernization of its air traffic control facilities and equipment and whether sufficient funds are being used to carry out these important health and safety functions.

➤ Finally, in the Administration's FAA Reauthorization proposal, they provide for a BRAC like process to

consolidate and relocate facilities. A BRAC process is an abdication of responsibility by Congress. Congress has always made decisions and done oversight based on recommendations and analysis from our agencies.

- In consolidating and realigning the FAA facilities, that process should be no difference. The FAA should not only engage with Congress but with the stakeholders affected.
  
- If the FAA identifies facilities that are truly excess and are not needed, then the FAA should identify those and put them in the budget and come up here and explain it to Congress and the affected communities.

- To go forward and blindly close facilities when we are not even sure what the benefits and effects are on safety is not good policy.
  
- That is why in HR 2881 we create an open, continuous, and defined process – something which the FAA should have been doing from the start. Contrary to statements that will be made today, the bill does NOT impose a moratorium. Instead, our bill allows affected stakeholders to work together with the FAA to develop criteria and make recommendations that will be submitted to Congress and published in the Federal Register for proper review and oversight. Any objections or changes made to those recommendations must again be submitted to Congress. Congress does not relinquish its role but instead, can provide thorough review, oversight and input.

- With that, I want to again welcome our witnesses today and I look forward to their testimony.
  
- Before I recognize Mr. Petri for his opening statement, I ask unanimous consent to allow 2 weeks for all Members to revise and extend their remarks and to permit the submission of additional statements and materials by Members and witnesses. Without objection, so ordered.