

July 13, 2017

Support H.R. 2997 - the 21st Century AIRR Act

In 1978, the United States deregulated the airline industry. Our nation was the first in the world to attempt this bold step. At the time, air travel was expensive and most people could not afford to fly regularly, if at all. Many were skeptical of deregulation and opposed it. Today, air travel in the United States is unquestionably more accessible to millions of Americans and has created millions of good paying jobs because of deregulation. Countries around the world have since followed our lead and air travel is booming everywhere.

Today, we are considering another major reform: to separate the air traffic control service from the FAA. In doing so, we will not be the first country to lead the way. Since 1987, over 60 countries have made such reforms and have non-government entities successfully managing their airspace. It is no longer such a bold idea. Rather, it has become a best practice of good government.

H.R. 2997, 21st Century AIRR Act, bipartisan legislation I cosponsored reforms Air Traffic Control (ATC) by establishing an independent non-for-profit service provider to manage and update air traffic services. It would establish a stable, self-sustaining funding source using a cost-based user fee structure to reduce current passenger taxes and reinvest surplus revenues into improving the aviation system. It would transfer ongoing air traffic modernization efforts – now known as “NextGen” under the FAA – away from the dysfunctional federal procurement system, which has slowed research, delayed acquisitions, and increased costs.

FAA Headquarters is a bureaucratic nightmare of red-tape and predictable, recyclable, and unconvincing excuses. The FAA has already spent more than \$7 billion on NextGen for a \$2 billion return in benefits. The USDOT Inspector General has warned that initial costs of \$40 billion could double or triple, delaying completion for another decade or more.

Congress isn't blameless either, passing 42 short-term resolutions to keep the government running rather than full appropriations and 23 short-term FAA authorization extensions over 5 years. Critics argue reforming FAA, not removing ATC, is the correct course. Tried and failed. Congress, too, is not going to change anytime soon. Separating ATC creates a stable funding source to modernize the system quicker.

If signed into law, FAA will remain in charge of safety. After three years, managing ATC services will be transferred to the new not-for-profit provider. Safety and R&D functions will remain with FAA.

Aviation groups in charge of keeping our skies the safest in the world - including air traffic controllers, commercial pilots, and flight attendants – support these reforms.

If countries like Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom can successfully separate ATC from government, the U.S. is surely capable of taking a transformational approach to build a 21st century aviation system.

Please join me in supporting the bipartisan H.R. 2997, 21st Century AIRR Act.

If you have any questions, please contact Matt Moran at matt.moran@mail.house.gov or 5-6572

Honorable Frank A. LoBiondo