

My name is Kevin Hern and I have been flying for 42 years, with thousands of hours of experience in the air. I have had extensive conversations with a great deal of individuals within the aviation industry and the issues they face with the FAA. I am here to speak about the aviation community's dissatisfaction with inconsistencies in flight standard district offices, FSDO's, and the ongoing pilot shortage.

I've heard from multiple sectors in the aviation community, from heavy lift helicopter operators to aircraft repairmen, about the serious lack of consistency from FSDO's. It is a common complaint that each FSDO office and inspector interprets and administers the rules set forth by the FAA. There are 77 FSDO offices operating in the United States, meaning 77 different ways rules and regulations can be interpreted, and that doesn't even account for individual inspectors at each FSDO interpreting rules in their own way.

If federal oversight is going to happen, there needs to be a one size fits all approach, and each rule and regulation needs to be the same across the board. The aviation community is frustrated that the FAA claims they oversee safety and regulatory standards across the entire US, when in reality there is a complete disconnect between the FAA office in Washington and individuals FSDO's. FSDO's are meant to be a resource to the aviation community, but instead they've just become unhelpful with their inconsistent guidance and burdensome certification processes. This is not a new issue, those in the aviation industry have been asking Congress to look into FSDO inconsistencies since the early 2000's. It is time we get to the root of the issue and demand the FAA to finally take control and create consistency within their FSDOs. At the end of the day, if the FAA is going to operate at a federal level, they must ensure all FSDO's interpret rules and safety standards equally, treating and regulating everyone the same way from FSDO to FSDO.

The next thing I want to touch on is pilot shortages. We have seen how the pilot shortage has created havoc in the commercial air industry, with an unprecedented amount of flight delays and cancellations. The FAA has taken no steps to address a main driver of this issue; the shortage of designated pilot examiners. There has been a shortage of pilot examiners for ___ (waiting on CRS answer) years now. There are plenty of individuals who love flying and are ready to embark on a career as a commercial pilot, but are having to wait around for their certifications. To make matters worse, these pilot students can't work towards other certifications while waiting on one they've been ready for. For example, a pilot student can't start getting paid for their flying hours until they get their private pilot license, making it financially difficult for most to work towards getting their commercial license. It is completely unacceptable that the FAA continues to delay commercial pilots entering the workforce by not addressing the designated pilot examiner shortage.

To close out, I want to remind everyone that the FAA states that their mission is to "provide the safest, most efficient aerospace industry in the world and satisfy the needs of aviation interest of the United States." In the past few years, the FAA has failed to uphold this mission, and the aviation system in this country continues to become less efficient, more expensive, and increasingly burdensome for the people who work to uplift and improve the aviation industry. If the FAA wants to be a trusted regulatory body, there must be consistency and transparency in how rules are upheld and how certifications are granted. I am a proud member of the aviation community, and hope to help lawmakers here in Washington understand how harmful the FAA has been to the industry.