

SUSAN M. COLLINS, MAINE, CHAIR

MITCH McCONNELL, KENTUCKY  
LISA MURKOWSKI, ALASKA  
LINDSEY GRAHAM, SOUTH CAROLINA  
JERRY MORAN, KANSAS  
JOHN HOEVEN, NORTH DAKOTA  
JOHN BOOZMAN, ARKANSAS  
SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, WEST VIRGINIA  
JOHN KENNEDY, LOUISIANA  
CINDY HYDE-SMITH, MISSISSIPPI  
BILL HAGERTY, TENNESSEE  
KATIE BOYD BRITT, ALABAMA  
MARKWAYNE MULLIN, OKLAHOMA  
DEB FISCHER, NEBRASKA  
MIKE ROUNDS, SOUTH DAKOTA

PATTY MURRAY, WASHINGTON, VICE CHAIR  
RICHARD J. DURBIN, ILLINOIS  
JACK REED, RHODE ISLAND  
JEANNE SHAHEEN, NEW HAMPSHIRE  
JEFF MERKLEY, OREGON  
CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, DELAWARE  
BRIAN SCHATZ, HAWAII  
TAMMY BALDWIN, WISCONSIN  
CHRISTOPHER MURPHY, CONNECTICUT  
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND  
MARTIN HEINRICH, NEW MEXICO  
GARY C. PETERS, MICHIGAN  
KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND, NEW YORK  
JON OSSOFF, GEORGIA

## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025

<http://appropriations.senate.gov>

ELIZABETH McDONNELL, STAFF DIRECTOR  
EVAN T. SCHATZ, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

February 20, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

In light of the midair collision at Reagan Washington National Airport on January 29, 2025 and other recent aviation incidents around the country, I write to express my concern with recent actions taken by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that could impede aviation safety. In particular, I am troubled by the termination of up to 400 employees at the FAA who were on probationary status<sup>1</sup>, in addition to the hundreds of employees who accepted the Office of Personnel Management deferred resignation program. Such a drastic change in workforce will inevitably have long-term consequences on the FAA's efforts to improve and modernize the airspace.

Last December, the aviation industry, including commercial airlines, general aviation, aviation manufacturers, labor, and other users of the sector asked the incoming Administration to address key staffing shortages and provide long-term sustainability to the FAA<sup>2</sup>. I am concerned that these recent staffing actions deteriorate the ability of the FAA to respond to equipment outages and implement modern technologies.

I am particularly concerned about the impact of these terminations on the congested New York airspace. As you know, 75 percent of all delays in the National Airspace system (NAS) occur because of delays in the New York (NY) metropolitan area airspace<sup>3</sup>, and I strongly urge you to take efforts to improve the efficiency of this airspace. For example, the FAA could update required navigation performance procedures and multi-airport route separation, update the minimum equipment requirement for users of the NY airspace to optimize precision navigation and spacing between airplanes, and replace the aging equipment used to route airspace in and out of the NY area. However, many of these improvements would require FAA employees who may have been terminated in the last week.

In order for Congress to better understand the employee actions taken by the Department and the FAA, and to abide by the President's commitment to work with Congress on improving the

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://x.com/secduffy/status/1891656952662405304?s=46>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.airlines.org/news/airlines-for-america-joins-industry-coalition-urging-new-administration-to-support-modernization-of-air-traffic-control/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices/ara/programs/nyapio](https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/ara/programs/nyapio)

aviation safety infrastructure, I ask that you provide the following information no later than Thursday, February 27, 2025.

1. Please provide the total number of employees by position in the FAA who accepted the deferred resignation program or who were on probationary status and have since been terminated. For each employee position, please include the line of business and program office, as well as the city and state in which the employee was based.
2. For each terminated employee position, please identify if the position will remain unfilled or if a new employee will be hired in the future. For positions that will remain unfilled, please identify how the work functions of those positions will be completed going forward.
3. What factors did the Department or the FAA consider when determining which employee positions were exempt from the deferred resignation program or probationary status terminations?
4. What steps did the Department or the FAA take to ensure the continuity and safety of the NAS for the traveling public prior to initiating the probationary employee terminations?
5. According to recent reports, most of the terminated employees were hired within the Air Traffic Organization's Technical Operations office. In Fiscal Year 2024, House Report 118-154 and Senate Report 118-70 both required the FAA to develop an annual Technical Operations Workforce Plan to ensure that the hardware and software systems that enable controllers to monitor and communicate with pilots and other air traffic control facilities are appropriately maintained. Will you commit to providing this workforce plan and include the impact of these terminations in this workforce plan?
6. It has been reported that employees within FAA's NAS Defense Program, who work with the Department of Defense and other law enforcement agencies to protect the NAS from disruption, damage, and terrorism, were inadvertently terminated<sup>4</sup>. Will you commit to review each individual termination to ensure there is no impact to our country's national security?

Thank you for your attention to these urgent concerns.

Sincerely,



---

Kirsten Gillibrand, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing  
and Urban Development, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://apnews.com/article/doge-faa-air-traffic-firings-safety-67981aec33b6ee72cbad8dcee31f3437>