

FAA / AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER NEGOTIATIONS – KEY POINTS

How Members can help the agency get a fair contract:

- Oppose bills to alter the current mechanism for resolving impasses, which requires Congressional review (but not approval) of the FAA proposal
- Decline hearings that might sidetrack the negotiations
- If submitted, allow the FAA's contract proposal to move forward on its merits

- > FAA has been at the table with its controllers union (NATCA) for 6 months seeking a new labor contract. Although the 1998 agreement signed by the prior Administration 'expired' in 2005, its key terms continue, including automatic pay hikes. Given the declining Aviation Trust Fund, the FAA can't afford to modernize the air traffic control system without some relief from NATCA.
- > The parties have not made progress at the table on key issues. With the current pact in place, NATCA is stalling and running a campaign to undermine public confidence in the FAA.
- > If there is an impasse, Congress has the last word under current law. The same provisions that gave FAA special authority to negotiate pay with its unions provided that in an impasse the Administrator can implement her proposal once Congress has had 60 days to consider it. But NATCA is shopping legislation that would change this and allow a third party arbitrator to decide controller compensation, usurping legislative and executive authority over pay for civil service.
- > The 1998 contract was a BAD deal and cost taxpayers \$2 billion on top of normal payroll growth. Controller salaries went up a staggering 75 percent from \$68,000 to \$113,000. The average compensation package (with locality pay, premiums and benefits) is \$166,000 a year, with more than 1300 controllers topping \$200,000.
- > The 1998 pact also gave away basic management rights. It allowed NATCA reps to fix daily work schedules, driving excessive overtime. Local side deals set minimum staffing standards well above operational needs and slowed down introduction of new ATC technologies. Union "official time" paid for by taxpayers is four times the government average. Controllers can even 'self-certify' illnesses for extended paid absences.
- > FAA is proposing a new pay scale with salary caps in line with the rest of civil service. It sees an historic opportunity for real savings, as it must replace 11,500 controllers anyway (most of its workforce) over the next 10 years due to retirements. The FAA proposal would 'grandfather' all current employees at existing salaries and leave them eligible for further annual locality and merit raises. The proposal also restores basic management rights.
- > NATCA wants more of the same, proposing automatic pay raises and other changes costing in 5 years another \$2 billion above normal government wide increases. The average controller package would exceed \$200,000. Though controllers manage traffic just 5 hours a day, NATCA wants to reduce daily working hours to 6 1/2, a 12% cut in productivity. NATCA seeks 50% more sick leave – for a workforce already using up all sick leave.