

Feb. 24, 2016

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

According to public reports, the Senate is gearing up to move on its own version of the FAA reauthorization bill. This version will probably not include an air traffic control corporation proposal. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune (R-SD) and Senate Commerce Committee Ranking Member Bill Nelson (D-FL) are looking to draft a bipartisan bill that would likely be more limited in scope. We expect if the Senate can come together to create a bipartisan proposal, they will try to introduce a bill before the end of March.

NATCA is working with staff on both sides of the aisle on a number of issues important to our members and the National Airspace System (NAS). One of our efforts surrounds hiring of air traffic controllers. The hiring package we are striving for would provide some relief and preference to CTI graduates, raises the maximum entry age for experienced controllers with a minimum of 52 weeks of experience from age 31 to 35, fixes the enforcement provisions of veterans' preference and prohibited personnel practices for FAA to ensure that veterans are not discriminated against in hiring, promotion, and other personnel decisions and creates a process for establishing durable staffing levels and a placement process to distribute current controllers more efficiently and new hires where they will be more likely to succeed in training.

As we shared with you on Feb. 12, the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee held a markup of the Aviation Innovation, Reform, and Reauthorization Act of 2016 (H.R. 4441, the AIRR Act) on Feb. 11. The committee passed the legislation by a vote of 32-26. The next step for H.R. 4441 is to receive a vote on the floor of the House of Representatives. The timing on that is uncertain. The initial goal by T&I committee staff was to try and bring H.R. 4441 to the House floor for a vote this week. Public reports have made it clear, however, that the T&I Committee still has work to do before the legislation can be considered on the floor. Concerns have arisen from appropriators, in both the House and Senate, the House Ways & Means Committee, some factions within the majority party, as well as members of the Democratic caucus.

The House Ways & Means Committee has requested to review the legislation before it can be considered on the floor of the House of Representatives. H.R. 4441 includes tax provisions on how money would be raised to pay for provisions in the bill, so the committee that oversees revenue and taxes must approve the bill before it can be considered by the body at-large. In this case, that means the House Ways & Means Committee needs to weigh in on the legislation before it can move forward in the legislative process. Its consideration of the bill could include a hearing. Right now, it is uncertain when the Ways & Means Committee

could review the bill. We will keep you informed if there are any updates on progress.

Additionally, the House and Senate are considering an extension of the current FAA authorization because it expires on March 31. This would be the second extension of the current authorization. NATCA is already working with committee staff in both the House and Senate advocating to include provisions in the extension that are important to our membership. This extension would likely last through the end of June or through the beginning of July in order to give both chambers of Congress more time to work on a new reauthorization.

We would like to remind you that before the 2012 FAA reauthorization bill passed there were 23 extensions. Each time the extension was about to lapse was another chance for a partial FAA shutdown and member furloughs. This is the sort of funding uncertainty that we have worked hard to address.

NATCA continues to push for reform to end, that funding uncertainty, which has been problematic for the workforce and the NAS for far too long. We have made clear that we will consider any and all reform proposals so long as they do not maintain the status quo or result in a for-profit system. That is why we support

H.R. 4441 – it is currently the only option on the table that offers a solution to the funding uncertainty, and is consistent with all of our organization's policies, practices, and principles while also protecting our members and the unionized workforce. Paul reiterated this pledge to members of the T&I Committee on Feb. 10, during a hearing to review air traffic control reform proposals. It was during this hearing that Ranking Member Peter DeFazio said he had never seen a bill so comprehensive in its worker protections. NATCA also supported an amendment offered by Ranking Member DeFazio during the committee's markup of H.R. 4441, which would have provided stable funding for the FAA. The amendment, however, failed by a vote of 25-34 and like H.R. 4441 was not supported by the Appropriators.

These are the first steps in what will likely be a long legislative process. But we are glad our Union has a seat at the table for this important discussion. The NATCA staff, the National Legislative Committee (NLC) and the many legislative activists have worked very hard to ensure we have a voice in the process. This is too crucial of an issue for us to sit on the sidelines and let other people decide our future for us.

We will continue to keep you updated as the legislative process moves forward. Remember to view the frequently asked questions here. If the answer is not there then email us at faabill@natca.net.

In Solidarity,

The NATCA National Executive Board

