



From the Desk of NATCA President Rich Santa

In the second edition of the From the Desk series on staffing, President Santa discusses how our Union will move forward to identify the required fully certified air traffic controller staffing needs for each facility in the National Airspace System (NAS) and collaborate with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to ensure that Congress authorizes sufficient funding to hire and train controllers to meet those staffing targets.

[The first edition](#) of this series covered the history and causes that have led to the current staffing deficit, as well as the steps that NATCA and the FAA, through the Collaborative Resource Work Group (CRWG), must take to update staffing targets. To this end, the CRWG has already started a pilot survey that will soon be shared with all facilities' FacReps and Air Traffic Managers to jointly collect the necessary data.



Participation in the survey will be critical because it will allow the CRWG to set operational staffing targets for each facility based on the most accurate data we can collect. We all know that controllers are stretched thin, with many working six-day weeks and mandatory overtime. It affects our quality of life and our physical and mental health – and it must be addressed to ensure that the NAS remains the safest and most efficient in the world.

Let me be clear – staffing shortages are not a new issue. This has been a battle our Union has fought for years. The FAA remains near a 33-year low for certified professional controllers (CPCs), and there are approximately 1,000 controllers who are eligible to retire. In recent years, we have advocated for several pieces of legislation that have become law, which have revamped the FAA's hiring processes. Still, there is more that must be done.

Last summer, the NAS experienced an unprecedented number of flight cancellations and delays, as business and leisure air travel returned to pre-COVID levels. These cancellations and delays directly affected hundreds of thousands of travelers on thousands of flights. For those not personally affected, there was unrelenting media coverage that described the “meltdown of the aviation system” for the general public. Controller staffing levels – in addition to convective weather, and airline operational issues– were at the center of this media coverage. The flying public, operators in the NAS, and members of Congress have demanded solutions.

However, shining a light on controller staffing challenges will help us as we continue to make a case to the FAA to update the operational staffing targets. The airline industry and other aviation stakeholders are in our corner and have joined the conversation. At no other time in our recent history has our Union been so closely aligned with so many other aviation stakeholders to achieve the same goal – to establish and transparently report appropriate operational staffing targets, which we believe will result in increased controller staffing.

We have convinced the FAA to increase controller hiring in FY23 from 1,000 to 1,500 and increase it to 1,800 in FY24. Working with the FAA we will continue to update and refine the priority placement tool to ensure we have the right number of controllers in the right place.

In discussion with senior leadership of the FAA, we have secured more funding for local training support, funding for more tower simulators, and investing and building more capacity at the air traffic academy.

At every opportunity we are correcting the false narrative that controller staffing is at 103 percent and ensuring that there is more accurate reporting of the cause delays in the NAS.

Although the President will make the final recommendation to Congress for FAA funding as part of his annual budget request, and Congress will authorize and appropriate the funds as it sees fit, our Union, through the CRWG, is now in the position to make sure that the operational staffing targets reflect the true and accurate needs of each facility and adequately address the staffing shortages.

In the final edition of this series, President Santa will discuss the Union’s legislative strategy regarding the upcoming conversation about FAA Reauthorization and appropriations, as it relates to controller staffing.

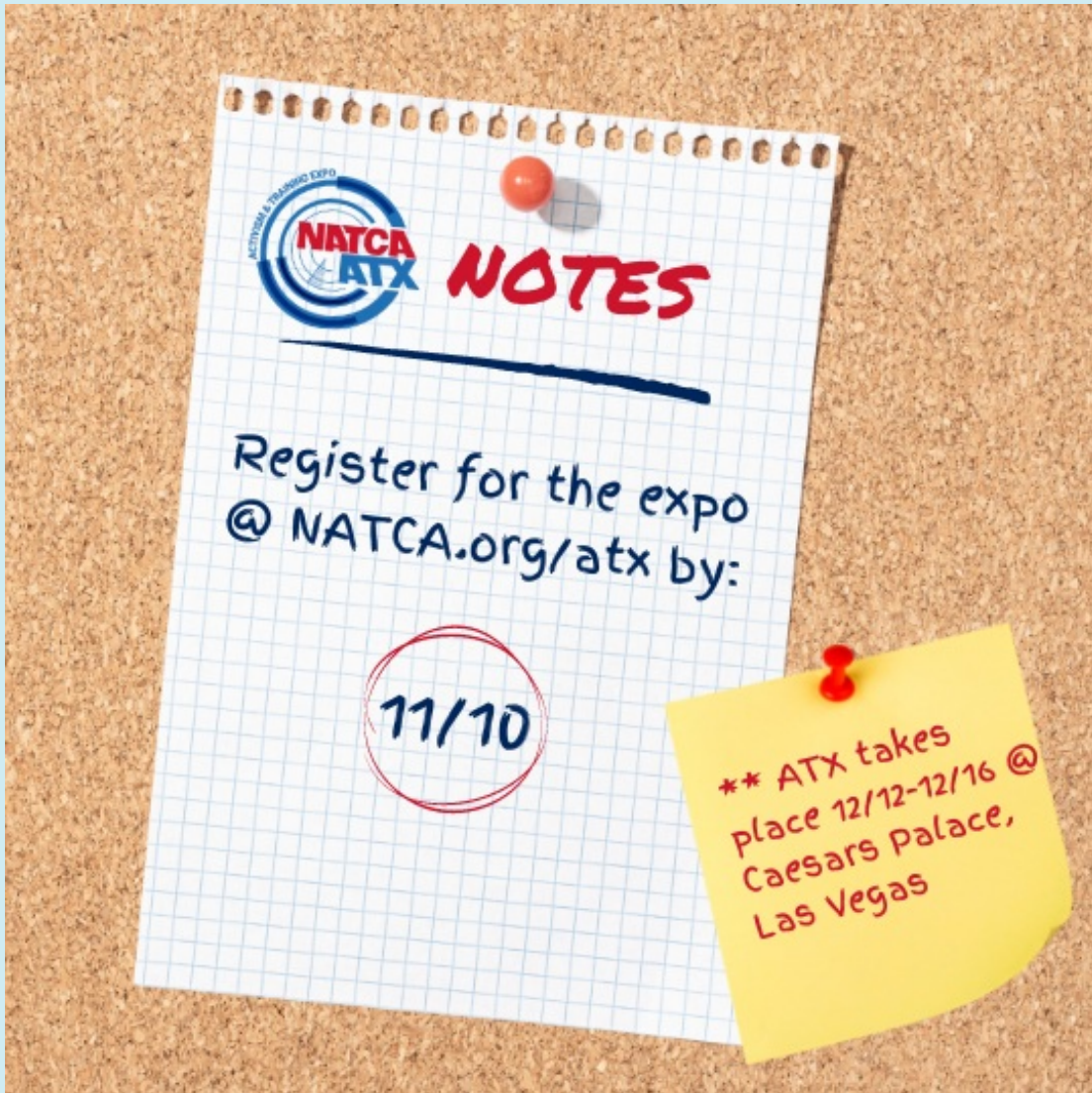
ATX Registration Ends Tomorrow!

Sign-up for NATCA’s first annual ATX closes tomorrow, Nov. 10! Register now for the event, which will take place Dec. 12-16 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas.

Do you want to get involved in NATCA but are not sure where to start? Have you looked at the NATCA academy class list and couldn’t decide what you would be most interested in? Have you tried to attend NATCA training, but couldn’t get the time off for a specific class or couldn’t attend due to

class size constraints?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, the NATCA Activism & Training Expo (ATX) is for you!



ATX will run all week, but you don't have to attend the entire event. Our training expo is designed so you can come for one day and attend a few modules from one of the many NATCA academy classes available that you are interested in or stay the entire week and attend as many modules as the event will allow. Every NATCA committee, academy class group, and many national workgroups will be present to offer training and information on their specific areas of expertise.

For more information, including the class schedule and travel policy, visit the event page [here](#).

E&A Bargaining Unit Celebrates 25 Years of NATCA Representation

Nov. 10 marks the 25th anniversary of NATCA's certification by the Federal Labor Relations Authority as the exclusive bargaining representative of the first FAA non-controller bargaining unit the Union organized and

HAPPY 25TH NATCAVERSARY, ENGINEERS & ARCHITECTS!



"In 1996, FAA Management told the engineers that they needed a union in order to have a seat at the table and excluded engineers from critical decisions relating to the work environment, project prioritization and planning, and career professionalism," said Region X (NRX) Alternate Regional Vice President (RVP) Curt Howe, who was one of the initial NATCA organizers working to make engineers a part of the NATCA family. "We organized to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the flying public. Customary workplace issues like pay and schedules were not at the forefront for engineers. Engineers sought a voice in high-level FAA program planning, worker safety, and quality of construction and electronic installations."

E&A consists of over 1,300 bargaining unit employees who are responsible for a number of essential services that the flying public doesn't usually consider when they travel: program management of air traffic control facilities and equipment, maintenance and modernization of the fleet of the FAA's flight inspection aircraft, ensuring aircraft are properly designed and tested, investigating aircraft incidents, approving airport improvements, implementing new programs, overseeing development projects, and providing software enhancements and maintenance for air traffic automation systems.

Read more [here](#).

Visit our Website



NATCA | 1325 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC 20005

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Sent by natcanationaloffice@natca.net