

National Air Traffic Controllers Association

AFL-CIO



September 27, 2023

Dear Members of the U.S. Senate:

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) represents nearly 20,000 air traffic controllers, aircraft certification specialists, engineers, and other aviation safety professionals. On their behalf, I write to strongly urge you to vote in support of the Continuing Resolution (CR) to keep the government open on final passage and oppose all poison-pill amendments. NATCA will consider adding this as a “key vote” in our legislative scorecard.

I applaud current efforts to move forward on a bipartisan CR in the U.S. Senate, which includes a short-term extension of the FAA’s authorization, another NATCA legislative priority. This would ensure the FAA and its dedicated workforce can continue to fulfill their vital mission. NATCA recognizes that additional negotiations will be required before full-year appropriations legislation and a long-term FAA reauthorization can receive bipartisan and bicameral support and be signed into law by the President. In the absence of this, Congress must keep the government open, at minimum. Anything less would jeopardize ongoing efforts to improve the safety and efficiency of the National Airspace System (NAS).

Shutting down the FAA for any length of time is deeply problematic for both aviation safety professionals and the NAS. The FAA is facing many challenges, including a well-documented air traffic controller staffing shortage, recent safety incidents, and the lack of a confirmed Administrator. The 35-day government shutdown that began in the winter of 2018 adversely affected controllers and other aviation safety professionals, who were asked to work for over a month without pay. It also eroded critical layers of safety within the NAS, as many of the safety activities that proactively reduce risk and increase the safety of the system were suspended during that shutdown. Ultimately, the NAS was less safe for months after the shutdown ended than before it began. The FAA, its frontline workforce, and the flying public can ill afford another disruptive shutdown, regardless of its duration.

Again, I urge you to vote in favor of the CR on final passage and oppose any poison-pill amendments. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rich Santa
President
National Air Traffic Controllers Association