



From the Desk of President Rich Santa: The Future of AT-CTI Programs and How NATCA Will Safeguard the Profession

In November, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) [announced significant changes](#) to the Air Traffic-Collegiate Training Initiative Program (AT-CTI) as part of several initiatives the Agency adopted in response to [a report from the FAA National Airspace System Safety Review Team \(SRT\)](#).

In the report, the SRT found that controller staffing shortages lead to diminished air traffic capacity and inefficient operations. The SRT also found that overtime is at historically high levels, because of the staffing shortage, concluding that it introduces additional risk into the NAS.

As part of its response to the findings, the FAA announced it would change the CTI program in the following manner:

“The FAA will work with AT-CTI programs to ensure that graduates from these programs have the necessary skills to begin on-the-job training at a facility. These graduates still must pass the Air Traffic Skills Assessment (ATSA) exam and meet medical and security requirements. Previously, these graduates were required to attend the FAA Air Traffic Controller Academy prior to being assigned to a facility.”

This change to the hiring process would allow CTI school graduates to skip the FAA Academy and begin facility-based training. The FAA believes this would help accelerate the introduction of new air traffic controllers into the National Airspace System (NAS) to help address staffing shortages.



I am a CTI graduate and I know that many of you are as well. The CTI programs are a good resource to recruit candidates who already have shown interest in aviation and a commitment to air traffic control as a career. That said, each CTI program has its own curriculum and grading standards and it would not be fair if some CTI graduates go through a less rigorous program when compared to the current FAA Academy standards, which will continue to apply to all general public applicants, including veterans who have not previously possessed a Control Tower Operator certificate. Additionally, they would be less ready to engage in facility-based training, potentially wasting our time and FAA's resources to train candidates who do not have a sufficient foundation of air traffic basics.

We have made it clear to the FAA that to ensure the students that graduate from the CTI programs are ready to work in facilities, our Union should participate in the FAA's oversight of the CTI programs.

Specifically, the FAA must ensure that there is a universal CTI curriculum, standards, and oversight over the training process to ensure the graduates are taught, tested, and evaluated to the same standards that exist at the FAA Academy. The FAA must also ensure that there is no reduction or degradation in the facility-based classroom, simulator, and on-the-job training process.

As this initiative moves forward, NATCA will continue to keep you up to date on any developments.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rich Santa', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rich Santa
President, National Air Traffic Controllers Association

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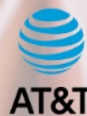
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Do you have a knack for design? Put your skills to use and enter NATCA's Legislative Activism T-Shirt Design Contest. We're accepting entries now through Dec. 15. The winner of the contest will be announced at NATCA in Washington 2024. The winner will also receive a pair of Bose Wireless Noise Canceling Over-The-Ear Headphones.

NATCA Legislative Activism

T-Shirt Design Contest

Rules:

- NATCA logo or NATCA Legislative logo must be incorporated into design
- Designs must be legislatively themed
- No use of trademarked or copyrighted material
- Must align with Hatch Act
- Design cannot be so intricate that the details are difficult to see

Send entries to aschwaegel@natca.net

DEADLINE: DEC. 22



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- Design must be legislatively themed
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- No advocating for or against a political party or candidate for a partisan political office or partisan political group
- Must be appropriate for workgroup wear (no profanity, no Hatch Act violations)
- Design cannot be so intricate that the details are difficult to see

Submissions should be sent to Allison Schwaegel at aschwaegel@natca.net.

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