



Member Update

National Academies of Sciences Report Doubles Down on Failed Controller Staffing Model

NOTE: NATCA distributed this message as a press release today.

The report issued today by the National Academies of Sciences, *The Air Traffic Controller Workforce Imperative*, ignores the true issues facing our nation and air traffic controller staffing. The flying public, the airlines, business and general aviation, and scores of other stakeholders throughout the aviation industry acknowledge the undeniable truth that air traffic controller staffing is in crisis.

The findings in this report are based on a staffing model that has proven to be the root cause of the staffing crisis we now face. It was not a valid approach to staffing in 2014 when the National Academies first endorsed it, and it certainly is not appropriate to double down on this failed approach to controller staffing in 2025.

These are the facts: The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is approximately 3,800 controllers short of where it needs to be to adequately staff our nation's facilities. More than 41 percent of certified professional controllers work 10-hour days, six days a week as a result. The morale of the 10,800 certified controllers that work throughout the National Airspace System (NAS) is at historic lows, not only because they are required to work long hours, short-staffed, but also because they work with obsolete equipment and systems in facilities that are crumbling around them. Defending this status quo does not make sense and is contrary to known facts.

Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy has recognized these problems and has the vision to break with the past philosophy that says things are good enough, when they are obviously not working at all. He has announced his plan to supercharge the hiring of air traffic controllers and improve controller staffing throughout the NAS. His efforts have already improved the hiring process. Sec. Duffy has also committed to modernizing air traffic control systems and facilities to enhance safety in the sky, reduce delays, and unlock the future of air travel. This plan also ensures hard-working air traffic controllers have a system they can rely on.

NATCA is proud that we have been able to work with Sec. Duffy to implement those plans. We will continue to work with the Secretary, the Department of Transportation, the Federal Aviation Administration, Congress, and industry stakeholders to ensure that the flying public has the air traffic control staffing it deserves.

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