

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 22, 2016

The Honorable Donald Trump
President-Elect of the United States
Transition Team Headquarters – Trump Tower
725 5th Avenue
New York, New York 10022

The Honorable Mike Pence
Vice President-Elect of the United States
Transition Team Headquarters – Trump Tower
725 5th Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear President-Elect Trump and Vice President-Elect Pence:

As you move forward with transition plans for your Administration, we want to call your attention to the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Contract Tower Program. The program, in place for over 30 years, has exemplified how the private sector and Federal government can partner together to improve air traffic safety in a proven cost-effective manner for the FAA and the American taxpayers. Currently, 253 airports and their surrounding communities in 46 states benefit from the enhanced safety and improved air traffic control (ATC) services provided by FAA contract towers.

The federal air traffic controllers do an excellent job managing ATC services at control towers at the larger airports across the country. But at several hundred of our nation's smaller airports and throughout rural America, the Federal government could not afford to provide these critical ATC services for the traveling public. Without it, people living and traveling to our small communities and rural areas would be without the important safety benefits that control towers provide. Federal contract towers supplement FAA-staffed facilities around the nation, strengthening a unified national ATC system and playing a vital role in connecting smaller airports and rural America with the national air transportation system.

Not only do these contract towers provide an important safety service, but they do so in a cost-effective fashion as validated in numerous reports by the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General. This is demonstrated by the fact that FAA contract towers handle approximately 28 percent of all U.S. air traffic control tower operations but account for just 14 percent of FAA's overall budget allotted to tower operations. Additionally, the contract tower program provides FAA and American taxpayers an annual savings of approximately \$200 million.

In addition to the many safety and financial benefits that FAA contract towers provide, it should also be noted that this program provides significant support for military readiness/training and national security operations. In fact, 47 percent of all military operations at civilian airports in the U.S. occur at airports with FAA contract towers. Moreover, the vast majority of controllers hired by the private air traffic control companies are former FAA or military controllers. Importantly, approximately 70 percent of these contract controllers are veterans.

We urge your Administration to take the necessary steps to ensure that this highly successful government and industry partnership continues to provide these critical ATC safety services, which will provide stability and economic growth in rural America. Earlier this year, the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee and the full Senate passed separate legislation (H.R. 4441 and S. 2658) that would provide needed regulatory reforms to the benefit cost analysis process used by the FAA to manage this program. Specifically, we encourage your Administration to adopt these measures as part of your efforts to help grow our economy.

As you continue to develop transportation policy for your new Administration, we want to assure you that the FAA contract tower program is one that enhances aviation safety, is cost effective, and has demonstrated widespread bipartisan and bicameral support in Congress.

Sincerely,



Jerry Moran
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



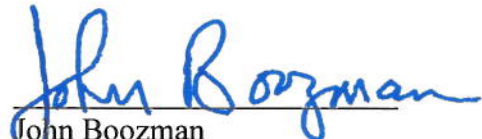
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Roy Blunt
United States Senator



John Boozman
United States Senator



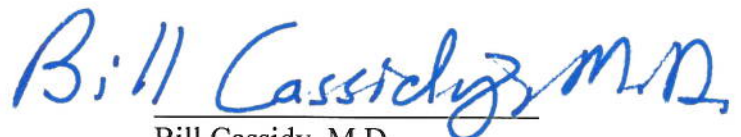
Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator



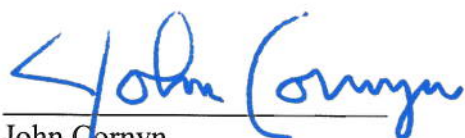
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



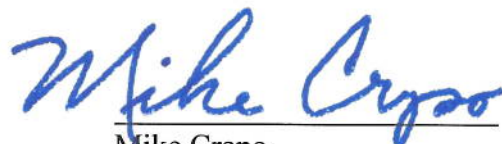
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senator



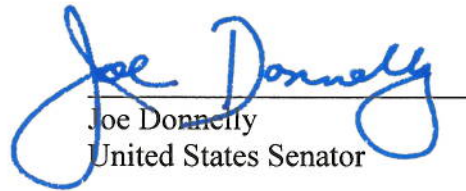
John Cornyn
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



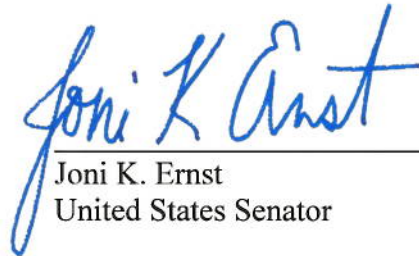
Steve Daines
United States Senator



Joe Donnelly
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



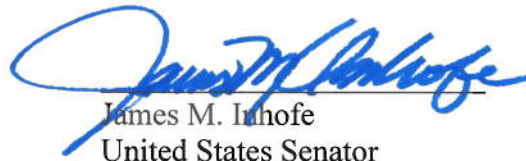
Deb Fischer
United States Senator



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Mazie Hirono
United States Senator



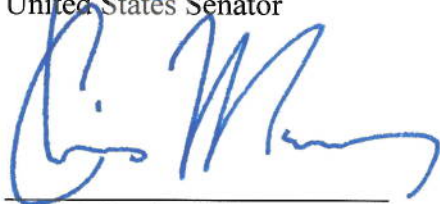
James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



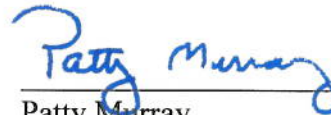
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



James Lankford
United States Senator



Chris Murphy
United States Senator



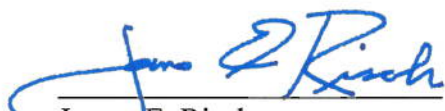
Patty Murray
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
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Rob Portman
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James E. Risch
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



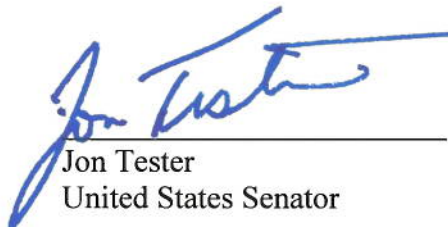
Roger Wicker
United States Senator



Pat Roberts
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Jeanne Shaheen
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Jon Tester
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Ron Wyden
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