



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 3, 2008

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FAA Oversight Lapses Deserve Vigorous Congressional Scrutiny

WASHINGTON, D.C. – *The following statement was offered by Edward Wytkind, President of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, in light of today's Congressional hearing criticizing the FAA's safety oversight of the nation's airlines:*

“The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is responsible for enforcing our nation's aviation safety standards. But in recent reports of major oversight lapses by the FAA, it is becoming increasingly clear that the Bush Administration's FAA is not doing its job to protect the flying public.

“While the FAA's shortcomings are not new, the latest revelations of inspectors being silenced or even punished by FAA management for reporting violations by the airlines are a new low for this agency. The FAA appears to have forgotten that its most important customers are air travelers who expect tough safety oversight by their government.

“Facing a firestorm of criticism, FAA leadership recently announced it will create a system to make it harder for managers to dismiss issues raised by inspectors. Shouldn't this be the FAA's regular order of business? We agree with the need for better systems, but we question why this is a new policy.

“If the FAA can't live up to demands of the job in our own backyard, how can the agency possibly be doing an adequate job enforcing safety standards at foreign aircraft repair facilities? Use of poorly regulated overseas repair facilities by U.S. carriers has increased dramatically in recent years. In 2006, \$3.7 billion of the \$5.7 billion spent on aircraft maintenance and repair was outsourced. According to government reports, 35 percent of outsourced heavy maintenance work at nine U.S. carriers was sent overseas in 2006.

“We have said for years that an under-staffed FAA, budget cuts, indiscriminate outsourcing and too heavy reliance on self-reporting data and problems are a recipe for disaster. The flying public deserves and demands an FAA that aggressively enforces our aviation safety regulations. Aggressive enforcement is what created the safest aviation industry in the world. We applaud Chairman James Oberstar for holding today's hearing, and urge Congress to continue holding the FAA accountable.”

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The Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, represents 32 member unions in the aviation, rail, transit, trucking, highway, longshore, maritime and related industries. For more information, visit www.ttd.org.

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