



*A bold voice for transportation workers*

## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS SHOULD NEVER HAPPEN FAA AND TSA OPERATIONS MUST BE PROTECTED**

The beginning of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress was marred by one of the most self-defeating legislative escapades of this century: the 35-day partial government shutdown. This shutdown, the longest in history, wreaked havoc on our transportation system, forced federal workers and contractors to stay at home or work without pay, and cost our economy billions of dollars that we will never get back. In the aviation sector alone, the strain placed on air traffic controllers, FAA safety inspectors and system specialists, and Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) undermined the safety and security standards that we know are critical to this network. Asking these and other federal workers to go without pay for over a month, not knowing when their next paycheck would come or how they would provide for their families, is simply unacceptable.

Though Congress and the Administration finally reached a deal and funded the government, federal agencies, including the FAA continue to deal with the fallout of the shutdown. While Congress has quickly moved on to other matters, it would be foolish to forget how dire the shutdown was, how damaging the consequences were for federal employees, and how, frankly, lucky we were to avoid a more serious catastrophe. For these reasons, we call on Congress to adopt legislation that would help insulate the FAA and TSA from future government shutdowns. In particular, we urge passage of H.R. 1108, the Aviation Funding Stability Act as well as complementary legislation that would provide the same protections for TSA screening operations.

Introduced by Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Peter DeFazio (D-OR), and Subcommittee on Aviation Chairman Rick Larsen (D-WA), H.R. 1108 would allow the FAA to draw funds from the Airport and Airways Trust Fund (AATF) to continue safe operations in the event of a government shutdown. This bill does not permanently wall off the FAA from the regular Congressional appropriations process, and the agency would still be subject to the normal oversight and funding functions of appropriators. By allowing the FAA to use funds from the AATF – which carries an uncommitted balance of over \$6 billion, and continued to collect fees during the shutdown – the bill would reduce the unnecessary risk to safe aviation operations that resulted from the shutdown. As evidenced by the fact that so many FAA employees were working without pay, and air travel continued throughout, it is the expectation of the federal government and the traveling public that air travel continue even when a funding lapse occurs. This bill would ensure that it continues safely.

Because H.R. 1108 would draw from AATF funds, it is unfortunately unable to cover the costs of continuing TSA screening operations in the event of the shutdown. TSOs play a critical role in keeping air transportation safe and secure, yet they too were forced to work without pay. These security officials already suffer from inequitable treatment as compared to other federal workers, and the strain of forgoing paychecks was devastating to morale and caused some to seek alternative employment. This is not the way to treat the men and women whose job it is to keep us safe.

Therefore, in conjunction with passing H.R. 1108, Congress should adopt legislation that would allow the TSA to continue funding screening operations in the event of a shutdown. While the user-fee based AATF is not the appropriate revenue source, the 9/11 Security Fee was likewise still collected during a shutdown. Those funds or another suitable revenue stream should be used to allow continued safe, secure, and paid TSA operations.

Let us be clear, we should not even have to discuss these types of legislation. Shutdowns should never happen, and this past shutdown should never have happened. No federal employee or contractor should have their livelihood threatened because they are being used as a political pawn in an unrelated partisan squabble. The reality is, however, that we are living in a political climate where elected leaders too often fail to perform the most basic Constitutional responsibility of funding government operations. In aviation, as TTD and its aviation unions warned, the risks posed by a shutdown are simply too great to allow this to happen again. We may not be able to solve the toxic political environment, but Congress can and should at the very least, ensure that the safest aviation system in the world continues to be so, even when they fail to live up to their responsibilities.

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