

STATEMENT OF SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN
SENATE COMMITTEE ON
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ON FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION
REAUTHORIZATION: THE STATE OF THE FAA
FEBRUARY 11, 2003

- Today's hearing is the first of a series of reauthorization hearings on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) programs. FAA accounts expire this year and it is this Committee's intention to develop and report out a reauthorization proposal in a timely manner. To do that, it would be preferable for us to have the Administration's reauthorization proposal in hand. I would urge the Administration to submit its reauthorization proposal as soon as possible. However, given the importance of this issue and the number of other competing priorities in the Senate, we will move forward without it if necessary.
- The FAA is solely responsible for ensuring the safety and efficiency of our nation's civil aviation system. The importance of the aviation industry to our nation's economy has become all too evident in the months following the tragedy of September 11, 2001. The industry is in a crisis that has deeply concerned this Committee. However, we must be equally concerned about the FAA and its programs and work to ensure that our nation's aviation system has the proper agency oversight. Our aviation system has been the leader in safety and efficiency. We must act this year to ensure that this continues to be true.
- The last reauthorization bill, AIR 21, enacted in 2000, provided historic funding levels for investment in our aviation system. We have made great progress in capacity and infrastructure improvements, but we must continue to make appropriate levels of funding available to ensure that infrastructure is further improved, our safety is maintained, and the security of our aviation passengers remains a priority. At the same time, we must be aware of the problems our airlines face. Without an airline industry, there is no need to reauthorize the FAA.
- Reauthorization will not be an especially easy task. There will be many competing programs for a limited amount of money. Revenues going into the Aviation Trust fund are declining. We must make some tough decisions about funding and other issues. I remain committed to moving forward with FAA Reauthorization bill at a rapid pace. I know our new subcommittee chair, Senator Lott, shares this commitment.
- I thank the witnesses for appearing and look forward to their testimony.