

Opening Statement of Bryan Bedford, Nominee to serve as FAA Administrator

Thank you, Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, Members of the Committee.

I want to start by thanking President Trump for nominating me, and for his bold vision to restore our Air Traffic Control system to its rightful place as the world's leader in aviation safety, efficiency, and reliability.

I want to thank Secretary Duffy for the confidence and support that he has shown me throughout this process.

America is the land where aviation began. Both of my parents worked on America's Space program, including the Gemini and Apollo missions, which, I believe, remain the greatest aviation achievements of this nation **or any nation**.

America has always led the world in aviation innovation.

Flying is safe, but as you know the system that manages our skies is showing its age. The stresses of this antiquated system truly came into view as we all returned to the skies after COVID.

Chronic understaffing, controller fatigue, outdated facilities and telecommunication technology has placed a strain on the men and women at the FAA. It has frustrated travelers with excessive delays and cancellations; and it has caused the public to question whether it's truly safe to fly.

The most tragic example, of course, was the chain of events that led to the January 29th collision near Reagan National resulting in the loss of 67 lives.

I continue to keep all the families of the victims of that tragedy in my prayers. They suffered an unimaginable loss. In our 24-hour news

cycle, these stories are often quickly forgotten. However, we must keep those 67 souls and their families in mind in all that we do going forward to honor their memory by making flying in America safer than ever before.

I can assure all of you that, if confirmed, my top priority will be public safety and in restoring the public's confidence in flying.

I watched the March 27th hearing, and I believe this Committee understands that the FAA is at a crossroads.

In the years preceding that tragic night in January, there were 85 similar near misses at Reagan National. How did this go unaddressed? It's unacceptable.

Failure to recognize this risk was a clear oversight of the FAA's Safety Management System.

Thankfully, this Administration has already taken swift action to secure the skies over our nation's capital by permanently restricting non-essential helicopter operations and eliminating mixed helicopter and fixed wing traffic. It is also my understanding that the FAA and the Department of Defense are reevaluating the agreement that governs certain military operations in the area to prioritize public safety.

Meanwhile, the FAA has launched a new initiative using new tools to identify other helicopter hotspots at airports around the country and inform whether similar restrictions may be necessary.

This is the kind of work that should have been done years ago, and I couldn't be more encouraged.

I've been in the field of aviation for more than 35 years. I believe we can get the Agency back on the right track, but first we must agree that our Air Traffic Control system needs significant investment.

Prior to accepting the nomination, I asked the President if I could meet with the senior team at the FAA. They are an impressive group of talented, dedicated men and women. During that meeting, they expressed serious concerns with outmoded, analog telecommunications technology, obsolete facilities, and the chronic staffing challenges at our air traffic control centers.

Airline passengers pay significant taxes intended to modernize our systems to ensure that we maintain the most advanced air traffic control capabilities in the world. I was informed that more than 90% of the FAA's ~\$6B annual modernization budget is consumed with the maintenance and sustainability of the old system, leaving virtually nothing for real modernization investment.

President Trump has provided us with a vision. Secretary Duffy and the team have been working diligently on defining the plan and the workforce surge. If confirmed, I will work closely with this Committee to articulate our strategy to competently execute the plan. I will work closely with the professional men and women at the FAA to provide the leadership necessary to execute the President's vision to build a new, best-in-class, air traffic control system, and to rectify the chronic understaffing at our nation's air centers. To accomplish this, we cannot repeat the mistakes of the past by accepting half measures.

Equally important to me is to reinvigorate the safety culture at the FAA; to become proactive and fully invested in a vibrant SMS culture. I seek transparency, frequent communication, and radical accountability to rebuild trust among all our aviation stakeholders and our FAA workforce.

I hope this will be a bipartisan effort: a shared commitment to restoring uncompromising safety, fidelity, and reliability to our National Airspace System.

Together we can design and build a new system that will allow the emergence of new technologies such as drones and electric vertical take off and landing aircraft to be safely introduced into the NAS and to usher in a new era of innovation and opportunity for American aviation.

Should the Senate choose to confirm me as the next FAA Administrator, I pledge to work collaboratively and transparently with this Committee, and to communicate frequently and candidly about the agency's challenges, and our strategy to overcome them. Most importantly, I pledge to uphold the sacred trust placed in us by the American people.

I welcome your support and your questions.

Thank you.