

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION**

Full Committee
Nomination Hearing
Thursday, November 6, 2025, at 10:00 A.M.

DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Mr. John DeLeeuw

COVER PAGE

RANKING MEMBER MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)

Alvin Brown Firing. During an interview with my staff on October 31, 2025, you were asked whether you would step aside without delay if the courts ruled in favor of Vice Chair Alvin Brown in his pending lawsuit challenging his unlawful removal from the NTSB. During your hearing, you were asked the same question. In response, you testified that you had “not considered or thought about” what you would do in such a situation.

Question 1: You have now had ample time to consider this very important question. If the courts rule in favor of Vice Chair Brown and direct him to be reinstated, will you commit to stepping aside swiftly?

Answer: *I would consult with legal counsel and comply with all court orders.*

American Airlines Recusal. You have a long history working for American Airlines, spending at least 33 years flying for the airline, including serving as American’s Managing Director for Safety and Efficiency.

Although American Airlines is not a formal party to the January 29, 2025, Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) mid-air collision investigation, PSA Airlines—the regional carrier involved in the crash—is a wholly owned subsidiary of American.

Question 1: Given your relationship with American Airlines, do you intend to recuse yourself from this NTSB investigation if confirmed?

Answer: *Yes*

Question 2: Given your employment at American, do you commit to recusing yourself from all matters before the NTSB involving American Airlines and its subsidiaries?

Answer: *If confirmed, I will follow all applicable ethics laws and obligations, including recusal requirements. I will consult with NTSB ethics officials to ensure that any necessary recusals are handled appropriately.*

Question 3: Do you commit to consulting with NTSB’s General Counsel to ensure there are no conflicts of interest before participating in Board matters involving American Airlines or its subsidiaries?

Answer: *Yes*

Strong ADS-B In Performance Standard. It’s crucial for the safety of the flying public that aviation operators, especially the commercial passenger fleet—which moves over 2 million passengers each day, is equipped with ADS-B In technology, and not alternatives that don’t deliver on safety.

Importantly, not every type of ADS-B In performs the same way and delivers the same benefits. That's why our bipartisan DCA safety legislation requires ADS-B In that boosts situational awareness for pilots and delivers real-time traffic advisories and alerts to ensure a robust additional layer of safety on the flight deck.

Question 1: What are the benefits of pilots having ADS-B In that is integrated with avionics on the flight deck?

Answer: ADS-B In, unlike other means to identify traffic information, (TCAS Advisories), offer the pilot the ability to see all the traffic information around them before the traffic becomes a threat to the crew.

Question 2: How would ensuring a clear compliance date for operators to equip with ADS-B In help advance safety in our aviation system?

Answer: I strongly support a deadline for ADS-B In implementation. Without a date, there could be delays equipping resulting in a degradation in safety that could have been achieved earlier.

Question 3: Do you agree that ADS-B In provides pilots with better situational awareness at lower altitudes where Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System (TCAS) does not activate?

Answer: Yes. Pilots would have ability to reference the traffic around them and the improved situational awareness would lead to an awareness of threats.

Question 4: Do you support our efforts to ensure FAA is moving forward with plans to certify advanced technologies that will be able to deliver stronger safety benefits than TCAS?

Answer: Yes, I believe ADS-B In provides additional safety enhancements and at American Airlines, our pilots have verified the safety benefits provided by our ADS-B In equipage. Offering airlines the ability to use the technology to not only improve safety but use the technology to improve airspace throughput, turns this mandate into a win/win for the National Airspace System.

Independent Agencies. I am deeply concerned about this Administration's illegal firings at independent agencies—and its blanket refusal to nominate a Democrat to any independent Board or Commission. President Trump has illegally fired over 25 Members from independent Boards and Commissions this year, including at the NTSB. Meanwhile, nearly ten months into this Administration, the White House has not nominated any member of the opposite party to any independent Board or Commission.

Question 1: Do you believe in the importance of bipartisanship on independent Boards and Commissions?

Answer: Yes

Question 2: Do you support having a fully staffed NTSB, which includes Members of the opposite political party?

Answer: Yes

Question 3: If the President or anyone else in this Administration threatened to fire you unless you took an action you disagreed with, would you refuse?

Answer: I do not believe the President would make such a threat; if so confirmed, I pledge to follow the law.

Rail Safety/Surface Transportation Reauthorization. Last year, there were 37 train derailments in the state of Washington. Captain DeLeeuw, if confirmed you will have to respond to tragedies in many different modes of transportation. On February 3, 2023, we saw one of those tragedies with the preventable train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio. NTSB made 34 new recommendations after its investigation.

Last Congress, Senators Brown, Fetterman, Casey, and then-Senator Vance introduced the Railway Safety Act that would implement a number of those recommendations.

Question 1: If confirmed do you commit to reviewing those 34 recommendations and working with Congress to include comprehensive rail safety reforms in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization?

Answer: Yes, if confirmed, I will work with the Chairwoman of the NTSB to advocate for implementation of the rail safety recommendations.

Roadway Safety. The NTSB is responsible for investigating significant highway crashes in the United States. We are currently facing a concerning roadway safety trend. In the state of Washington, 2023 was the worst year for traffic deaths since 1990. And last year, 730 people died in crashes on our roads.

Question 1: How do you believe we can reverse our worsening roadway safety record and save lives on our roads?

Answer: I believe education to all drivers about the dangers of impairment, distraction, and excess speed, and advocating for the adoption of current NTSB Safety Recommendations to be implemented, will help to reverse the trend.

Question 2: The NTSB has 198 open recommendations to Department of Transportation on highway safety matters. What do you believe are the most important recommendations the board has made to address roadway safety?

Answer: Safety recommendations focusing on reducing speeding, impaired driving, and distracted driving by improving driver behavior through education and technology. These recommendations include the mandatory use of intelligent speed assistance systems, passive alcohol detection systems, and advanced driver-assistance technologies.

SENATOR AMY KLOBUCHAR (D-MN)

Aviation Safety. Americans deserve safe and dependable air travel, and no one should have to second guess whether their loved one will make it safely to their destination. In your testimony you mentioned the importance of implementing National Transportation Safety Board recommendations to improve safety.

- Which open NTSB recommendations do you believe are especially important for improving aviation safety?

Answer: Require ADS-B In (with a deadline), improve general aviation safety, and implementation of Safety Management Systems (SMS) for all revenue passenger-carrying operations.

SENATOR TAMMY BALDWIN (D-WI)

1. In August, a CPKC train derailed in Dodge County, Wisconsin. This is the second derailment in the exact same location in two years. It raises serious questions about the reliability of this stretch of rail infrastructure and poses safety concerns for the Reeseville community. The NTSB is leading an ongoing investigation into the derailment. If confirmed, will you commit to thoroughly investigating this derailment and providing safety recommendations?

Answer: Yes