

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

Nomination Hearing
Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at 10:00 A.M.

REPUBLICAN QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Mr. Bryan Bedford

COVER PAGE

SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN (R-AK)

Biden Rules Crushing Guide Operations:

A few of our lodge operators have been advised that the FAA will begin enforcing requirements brought about by changes to FAA legal interpretations and policy decisions adopted during the Biden Administration, but which has not been enforced until now.

There has been law on the books since 2000 exempting Alaska Guide services from being treated as an air taxi (Part 135), as a flight is incidental to guide service.

The FAA now opines that the statute is not intended to treat these flight operations as incidental to guide and lodge operations in certain circumstances, even though they have historically been exempt from compliance with Part 135.

President Trump has made clear by the February 19, 2025, Executive Order “*Ensuring Lawful Governance and Implementing the President’s ‘Department of Governmental Efficiency’ Deregulation Initiative*” “that the creeping regulatory burdens placed on the public and small businesses in particular is not in the public interest. The President explicitly imposed limitations on adoption of new regulations without reduction of existing regulatory burdens.

President Trump’s Executive Order includes the following language:

‘It is the policy of my Administration to focus the executive branch’s limited enforcement resources on regulations squarely authorized by constitutional Federal statutes, and to commence the deconstruction of the overbearing and burdensome administrative state.’

The same Executive Order includes this language regarding reduction of regulatory burdens, specifically targeting the following:

“regulations that impose significant costs upon private parties that are not outweighed by public benefits;”

- Will you commit to work with the Alaska Professional Hunters Association and the guide industry to review this new interpretation that is threatening the business operations of these fishing and hunting guide businesses, so that they can to continue to operate safely - as they have for decades?
- With the appropriate discretion by FAA over safety of operations, it would be consistent with President Trump’s stated policy in the recent Executive Order to weigh the appropriateness of pausing enforcement of this Biden Administration decision pending further review and analysis.

Response: If confirmed, I will commit to engaging with the Alaska Professional Hunters Association and affected stakeholders to fully understand the operational impact of the FAA’s

current interpretation. I recognize the long-standing role that guide and lodge services have played in Alaska and the importance of regulatory clarity and consistency. I will work to ensure that FAA policy reflects both the intent of applicable statutes and the need to support small businesses—while upholding aviation safety. Any changes must be informed by sound legal grounding, stakeholder input, and the Administration’s commitment to reducing unnecessary regulatory burdens.

Aircraft Certification:

The 2024 FAA Reauthorization bill including language aimed at improving the aircraft certification process through an independent study on the future state of certification, with the goal of keeping aviation the safest mode of transportation while also bringing needed efficiency to the certification process.

- If confirmed, how will you utilize those findings, and make other improvements, to ensure the FAA upholds a certification process that supports American aviation manufacturing competitiveness in getting new aircraft to market?

Response: If confirmed, I will ensure that the FAA fully considers the findings of the independent study to modernize and strengthen the aircraft certification process. My focus will be on enhancing safety while streamlining procedures to reduce unnecessary delays and promote innovation. By improving collaboration with industry, investing in workforce development, and embracing risk-based, data-driven oversight, we can maintain global leadership in aviation safety and support American competitiveness in bringing new, advanced aircraft to market efficiently and responsibly.

SENATOR ERIC SCHMITT (R-MO)

- Critical FAA activities, including the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), are funded by the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. The Trust Fund derives the majority of its revenue from taxes on airline passenger-paid tickets. This excise tax is one of the many ways passengers contribute to the funding of our airports and aviation system. Can you address the importance of the AIP, and will you commit to working with me to ensure the AIP supports investment at Missouri airports such as St. Louis Lambert International Airport, where the needs are significant?
 - Additionally, will you commit to engaging with your counterparts at the Department of the Treasury and the IRS to ensure that the solvency of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund is protected through the equitable collection of excise taxes on mandatory fees (such as so-called “passenger usage fees,” “carrier usage charges”) or any similar mandatory fee scheme that the IRS has already stated are subject to the excise tax?

Response: If confirmed, I will support the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) as a critical tool for maintaining and upgrading airport infrastructure nationwide. I recognize the importance of ensuring airports like St. Louis Lambert International receive the support they need to meet growing demands and modernize facilities. I will also commit to working with Congress to ensure the Airport and Airway Trust Fund remains solvent. This includes engaging with the Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to ensure consistent application of the aviation excise tax to mandatory airline fees, in line with guidance and statutory intent.

- A few years ago, the aviation industry encountered operational disruptions and unexpected costs that could have been avoided as a result of the deployment of 5G. As the FCC looks to advance additional spectrum sales, how would you ensure that the safety of the aviation industry is prioritized? Further, if equipment modifications are necessary, how would you ensure the industry is given sufficient time and resources to accomplish the modifications?
 - Will you commit to making sure the agency remains proactively engaged across industries and with the FCC to prioritize safety?

Response: If confirmed, I will prioritize proactive and sustained coordination with the FCC and industry stakeholders to ensure that aviation safety is never compromised by spectrum deployment. The 5G rollout highlighted the need for early, cross-sector engagement and better risk assessment. Should equipment modifications be necessary, I will work to ensure the industry is provided adequate time, technical guidance, and resources to comply safely and efficiently. My commitment is to safeguard the flying public while supporting innovation through thoughtful, safety-first integration of new technologies.

- Families who've lost loved ones in aviation disasters carry a perspective that can't be replicated, and too often, they're only consulted after tragedy strikes. If confirmed, will you commit to maintaining regular engagement with victims' family organizations, not just in the aftermath of crashes, but as a consistent part of the FAA's safety decision-making process?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will commit to maintaining regular engagement with victims' family organizations. Their voices are vital to the FAA's continuous improvement and safety mission. I believe safety policy should be informed not just by data, but by the lived experiences of those who have endured loss. I will ensure the FAA maintains ongoing dialogue on safety, transparency, and accountability with these families.

SENATOR TIM SHEEHY (R-MT)

1.) The FAA is finally moving forward as required under a contract tower pilot program to convert Bozeman airport into a federal tower. Will you work to ensure prompt completion of this transition, and include Missoula and Kalispell airports, which also suffer from insufficient contract tower staffing levels, in the pilot program?

Response: Yes, if confirmed, I will work to ensure the timely transition of Bozeman to a fully federal tower as required under the contract tower pilot program. I also recognize the importance of addressing staffing shortages at Missoula and Kalispell and will review their inclusion in the program to support safe, efficient air traffic operations across Montana.

2.) Helena Regional Airport is one of two towers nationwide with non-radar approach control despite meeting the FAA's standards for airport radar. Will you commit to working with Helena to design, fund, install, and maintain additional surveillance equipment in their ATC tower?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with Helena Regional Airport to assess the feasibility and funding pathways for installing appropriate radar or surveillance capabilities. Ensuring the safest and most efficient airspace management is a priority, particularly at airports meeting FAA criteria.

3.) Will you work to update Part 23 and restore American aviation innovation and manufacturing capacity?

Response: If confirmed, I will support efforts to ensure that the FAA's regulatory framework, including Part 23, is clear, efficient, and aligned with safety and technological advancement. I will work with stakeholders to explore opportunities for continued improvement that support American aviation leadership and manufacturing strength.

4.) Do you support maintaining a minimum of two pilots on the flight deck and will you oppose any move to reduced crew efforts at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)?

Response: I understand the importance of maintaining confidence in flight deck operations and recognize that decisions regarding crew size must be rooted in rigorous safety analysis. If confirmed, I will ensure that the FAA continues to engage constructively at ICAO and other forums, with safety as the guiding principle for all discussions related to flight crew configurations.

5.) Do you support more simulation and scenario-based training for pilots?

Response: If confirmed, I will support efforts to enhance structured pilot training, including increased use of simulator and scenario-based methods. These tools offer valuable opportunities to reinforce critical decision-making and preparedness in a controlled, high-fidelity environment that complements traditional training.

6.) Will you review pending applications for sustainable aviation fuels and technologies awards to ensure a timely and fair response process?

Response: If confirmed, I will review the FAA's processes for evaluating applications related to sustainable aviation fuels and emerging technologies to ensure they are handled in a timely, transparent, and fair manner. Supporting innovation in this area is essential.

SENATOR SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO (R-WV)

Question 1 – NOTAM Improvement Act Update

Mr. Bedford, thank you for being here today and thank you for the conversation we had last week. I appreciate your deep aviation experience and your willingness to serve.

Senator Klobuchar, Moran, and I worked to get the NOTAM Improvement Act signed into law, and I understand that the system should be fully upgraded by September, but this an important safety system that has failed 2 times this year. I along with Senator Klobuchar and others are still waiting for a response to a letter we sent to the FAA on April 3. But while a new system this year may be a big improvement it may not be perfect and could see challenges when it first is coming online.

- **What do you plan to do on day 1 to bolster the NO-TAM System to ensure there are not future outages and that the new system is a success?**

Response: If confirmed, on day one, I will work to ensure the transition to the new NOTAM system is executed safely and reliably. I understand the critical nature of this system and the disruptions its failures can cause. I will prioritize testing, contingency planning, and strong internal oversight to mitigate risk during the rollout. I will also ensure timely follow-up on outstanding Congressional correspondence, including your April 3 letter, and maintain open communication on progress and performance.

Question 2 – ATC Upgrade Transparency

There is strong bipartisan support for upgrading our air traffic control system. This is not a new idea as NextGen was first announced nearly 20 years ago and we have not seen the promised benefits.

I commend Secretary Duffy for making this a top priority. One priority I would like to see is transparency when the FAA is spending tons of money for a system upgrade. I have been told this money is hard to track because the way the FAA buys new systems is complex,

- **But do you agree that taxpayers deserve to see how their money is being spent on A-T-C upgrades in a clear way?**

Response: Yes, I agree that taxpayers deserve clear, transparent accounting for how public funds are spent on ATC modernization. While I understand the FAA's procurement processes can be complex, that cannot be a barrier to accountability. If confirmed, I will work with agency leadership to ensure that spending on modernization efforts is better communicated to the public and Congress, and I will support efforts to improve how progress and costs are tracked and reported.

Question 3 – WV Airports

In West Virginia there are 7 commercial service airports but many have aging equipment and some that does not work anymore - like the FAA's lighting tower system at Morgantown Airport that is rusted out and means that more flights will have to be diverted in less than ideal visibility conditions.

There are other examples at my hometown airport in Charleston which has the oldest glide-scope still in use from 1987, its approach lighting system was built in 1958, and its Tower cab is from 1950. It's TRACON ("tray-con") is also from the 50s and would be a great location for expansion.

- **Will you prioritize improving rural airports that have extensive deferred maintenance and broken equipment?**

Response: I recognize the vital role rural airports play in connecting communities and supporting local economies. Deferred maintenance and outdated infrastructure, like the examples you mentioned in Morgantown and Charleston, present real challenges to safety and service. If confirmed, I will work to ensure the FAA's infrastructure investment strategy includes a strong focus on rural and regional airports with aging equipment, and I will engage with your office to better understand the needs in West Virginia.

Question 4 – Pilot Mental Health

One topic I would like to touch on is pilot mental health. It is a very stressful job and while many other fields have benefited from resources in this space a culture of silence still exists for pilots. Many pilots are afraid to admit or be treated for something in the fears that it will penalize their careers.

- **Do you agree that we should work to have an improved mental health system for our pilots?**

Response: I agree that improving the approach to pilot mental health is essential. While safety must remain paramount, I believe we can reduce the stigma around seeking help and modernize how we support pilots' mental wellness. If confirmed, I will work with experts, industry, and pilot groups to identify responsible, evidence-based improvements that support safety and promote a healthier, more transparent culture within the profession.

Question 5 – WV Flight Schools

In West Virginia we have 2 excellent part 141 pilot schools at Marshall University and at Fairmont State University. These schools are extremely popular, but I have heard of difficulties in getting designated pilot examiners or DPEs to certify new pilots. There have been some changes in the past so that DPEs are not limited to specific states, but that has not served smaller

rural states like mine as well as originally thought. We want more qualified pilots to take to the skies and not have to wait and wait to be certified

- **Can you commit to working with me to improve the DPE program and the self-certification option for Part 141 schools?**

Response: If confirmed, I will work with you and FAA leadership to address ongoing challenges in the DPE system, including availability in rural states. I'll also review the self-certification process for Part 141 schools to identify whether further flexibility or oversight adjustments could improve pilot certification timelines without compromising safety or standards.