

SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
Questions for the Record
“FAA’s Plan for ATC Modernization: Evaluating Progress, Ensuring Accountability and Results”
December 18, 2025 – 2:30 PM

Written Questions for the Record Submitted by Hon. Maria Cantwell to Mr. Bedford

Ethics Agreement Violation. As we discussed at your hearing, I am very concerned that you have still failed to divest from Republic Airways (Republic) well past the deadline required by your ethics agreement. I sent you a letter on December 9, 2025, requesting documents and information about this matter. While I appreciate your initial response on December 15, 2025, you failed to answer several requests, and I have continued questions about this serious matter.

Question 1: In your OGE-278e, you acknowledged that Republic valued its stock “annually” when it was a private company from 2017 until its merger with Mesa Air Group (Mesa) in November 2025. You said that the purchase price of your privately held Republic stock would be based on the most recent valuation at the time of your resignation, which was in July 2025. Please provide the most recent valuation of Republic’s private stock as of the deadline to divest in your ethics agreement (October 7, 2025).

Answer:

Question 2: When you were still president and CEO of Republic, when was the last time the company valued its stock to the best of your recollection? Please provide the month and year.

Answer:

Question 3: When you were still president and CEO of Republic, what third party did the company retain to conduct its most recent valuation of the company stock to the best of your recollection?

Answer:

Question 4: According to a Certificate of Divestiture you obtained from the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) on September 11, 2025, you held 16,733 shares of Republic stock. Does this reflect the total number of shares you presently hold? If not, please specify the number of shares you presently hold.

Answer:

Question 5: Had you divested your Republic stock on or before October 7, 2025, as you were required to do, would your shares have been worth less than what they are presently valued as of December 18, 2025 (RJET closing share price was \$20.81)? If yes, please provide a complete description of the difference in value.

Answer:

Question 6: Assuming you still intend to fully divest, if the value of your shares in Republic has increased since October 7, 2025—which appears likely given the completion of Republic’s merger with Mesa—will you forfeit any increased capital gains you receive?

Answer:

Question 7: As requested in my December 9, 2025, letter, please provide all communications between you and any officer or employee of Republic since your confirmation on July 9, 2025, regarding or relating to Republic’s merger with Mesa. If there are none, please certify that to be the case after a reasonable search was conducted.

Answer:

Question 8: During your hearing on December 17, 2025, you claimed to have relied on the advice of a career DOT ethics official to excuse your violation of your ethics agreement. Did you ever inquire with any DOT ethics official or OGE official about the status of your October 7, 2025, extension request? If yes, please list the date of each such instance and the official(s) you contacted. If you do not provide this information, your response will be deemed to acknowledge there were no such attempts.

Answer:

Question 9: Please provide documentation reflecting each such instance listed in response to the preceding request.

Answer:

Question 10: Do you acknowledge that the responsibility for ensuring full compliance with your ethics agreement is solely yours?

Answer:

Question 11: Before you sought an extension on October 7, 2025, you received a Certificate of Divestiture from OGE on September 11, 2025. Why did you not complete the process for divesting your shares with Republic at that time?

Answer:

Question 12: As requested in my December 9, 2025 letter, please provide a complete description of all actions you have taken since July 9, 2025, to divest your equity in Republic, including but not limited to all communications with Republic about accelerating the vesting of your stock, buying back your shares, or converting your vested restricted stock units into private company stock.

Answer:

Question 13: At the hearing on December 17, 2025, you testified that you do not know when you will be able to divest from Republic because your shares have now been terminated and you are waiting for your shares to be reissued under the new organizational structure post-merger. But as noted above, you sought and received a Certificate of Divestiture on September 11, 2025—which indicates you had the ability to divest your shares at that time, before the merger closed. Yes or

No: Had you divested by October 7, 2025, would you need any shares to be reissued to effectuate your divestment?

Answer:

Question 14: You testified during the hearing that your “intention was always to complete the merger and to sell the shares in the market.” Provide a complete explanation for why you “always” intended for Republic’s merger with Mesa to complete before you complied with the divestiture requirement in your ethics agreement.

Answer:

Question 15: In addition to fully responding to my questions for the record, do you commit to fully complying with any additional request or inquiry regarding your ethics agreement?

Answer:

Military Training Flight Loopholes.

On July 29th this year, you delivered remarks at Chairman Cruz’s press conference unveiling the ROTOR Act stating that “most all of the comments and identified safety weaknesses that the families identified have been incorporated in this key legislation and I certainly hope it has strong bipartisan support” yet during the December 17 hearing you said that you “shouldn’t opine for the administration on whether the administration is in favor or not.”

Question 1: Can you please clarify for the record whether you agree that military flights – including proficiency flights (also known as “check rides”) – should be required to broadcast their location in DC airspace and in other busy airspace nationwide using **ADS-B Out** to prevent safety risks to commercial flights?

Answer:

Air Traffic Organization Oversight and Fixing Controller Safety Reporting Loop.

As we discussed at the hearing, controllers testifying at NTSB’s hearings on the DCA collision sounded the alarm that their reporting system for filing safety concerns at FAA’s Air Traffic Organization does not work. They said this system – known as the Air Traffic Safety Action Program (ATSAP) – is “obsolete” and “ineffective”. This is a safety issue - safety reporting systems are critical components of a strong Safety Management System (SMS) and healthy safety culture. The ATSAP is an important part of the Air Traffic Organization’s SMS.

You and I have discussed this and have agreed that both FAA’s and the Air Traffic Organization’s SMS does not work. That’s why I’ve introduced multiple bills requiring an expert review panel to ensure the FAA has a mandatory, effective agency-wide SMS, which would also help fix the SMS in individual FAA offices like the Air Traffic Organization. It’s encouraging to see in your testimony that you support my push and are taking steps to implement an agency-wide SMS to ensure FAA better manages and responds to safety risks.

But I am still very concerned that controller concerns were ignored by FAA managers leading up to the DCA collision and that they are still not being listened to at FAA. These systemic problems must be fixed.

Question 1: What specific actions are you taking to fix the broken feedback loop that controllers and other air traffic personnel rely on to voice safety concerns?

Answer:

Question 2: Do I have your commitment to work with controllers and other frontline employees to fix the safety culture and SMS at the Air Traffic Organization? This is critical to ensure we don't see another tragedy like the DCA collision.

Answer:

Question 3: As part of the FAA's newly announced agency-wide Flight Plan 2026 Strategy, you mentioned that FAA will "create one FAA Safety Management System (SMS)" and establish a Safety Integration Office to promote a FAA-wide safety risk management process. How will ensuring one integrated SMS at FAA help to fix problems with the individual SMS at certain lines of business like the Air Traffic Organization?

Answer:

Question 4: Please describe what specific actions the Safety Integration Office will take to proactively identify and address safety hazards in the National Airspace System. How will the office will ensure safety data and actions to address related aviation safety concerns are not siloed at any particular office of the FAA and that FAA employee safety reports are acted upon?

Answer:

Air Traffic Control System Upgrade Accountability and Transparency.

The reconciliation law enacted in July mandates air traffic facility closures and consolidations, raising legitimate concerns. It requires the closure and consolidation of multiple Air Route Traffic Control Centers (ARTCCs) and Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACONS) facilities. This means FAA must select at least three existing ARTCCs for divestment and at least 10 existing ARTCCs for closure or consolidation. Yet the law provides no guidance on how these impactful decisions should be made. When the reconciliation bill came before the Senate, I filed amendments to remove provisions that called for facility consolidation and closure and instead reallocated those funds to where they should go – to hire, train, and recruit more controllers and invest in the replacement and modernization of air traffic control towers at airports.

Question 1: What specific criteria does FAA intend to use to select the ARTCCs and TRACONS that will be closed or consolidated?

Answer:

Question 2: Will you commit to conducting a safety risk management assessment **before** taking any actions to close or consolidate these facilities to assess how such actions would impact FAA’s workforce and the safe management of air traffic in the NAS?

Answer:

Question 3: How does FAA intend to notify and consult with affected communities and segments of the FAA workforce before decisions are finalized?

Answer:

Question 4: How will you ensure that facility closures and consolidation don’t displace controllers and other FAA air traffic personnel and that FAA’s ability to manage air traffic isn’t compromised in affected areas?

Answer:

Shutdown Flight Reductions at Top 40 Airports.

On November 6, the FAA announced that airlines had to reduce flights by up to ten percent at the top 40 high-traffic airports nationwide, citing controller staffing triggers and aviation safety information system data. On November 12, DOT changed its order to hold flight reductions steady at six percent, citing “substantial and rapid improvement in facility staffing conditions.” FAA further reduced flight cuts to three percent on November 14 before cancelling the flight restrictions on November 17, returning the aviation system to normal operations.

Question 1: Beginning on November 14, airlines were required to cut three percent of flights. According to aviation analytics data from Cirium, on Sunday, November 16, airlines canceled only a quarter of a percent of flights, far below FAA’s requirement. Later that evening, FAA announced it would cancel flight restrictions. Mr. Bedford, you and Sec. Duffy have cited safety data as the reason for cutting flights. So, in your view, why did some airlines fail to comply with FAA’s requirements?

Answer:

Question 2: Early this month, the FAA sent letters to airlines requesting that they prove their compliance with the required flight cuts. Do you expect that FAA will fine airlines that did not comply? Why or why not?

Answer:

Question 1: Last year, we required the FAA to set maximum hiring targets through FY 2028 to maximize its training capacity and increase controller staffing. My bill would require FAA to do this for five more years through FY 2033. Do you support this and agree with me that we must ensure FAA continues maximum controller hiring for at least 10 consecutive years to better position FAA to offset future attrition and retirements?

FAA Workforce Brain Drain.

The FAA's ability to carry out its safety mission is seriously hindered by the Trump Administration's attacks on the federal workforce. Both ACSAA and FAA Reauthorization call for more safety staff, not less. FAA must invest in recruiting and training aircraft certification experts, safety inspectors, maintenance technicians, and more safety personnel who maintain our gold standard in aviation safety.

Yet, this Administration has fired probationary personnel – the future of the agency; encouraged about 2,100 FAA employees to retire via buyouts; and FAA told its workforce in May to expect a Reduction in Force. The flying public is counting on this administration not to short-change safety.

Question 1: How will these personnel losses at FAA affect the agency's ability to deliver a brand new air traffic control system in three and a half years?

Answer:

Question 2: Are the departures from FAA's Deferred Resignation Program affecting the ability of FAA's Air Traffic Organization to implement airspace safety reforms in response to the DCA mid-air collision? If not, has ATO done an assessment to assess and verify the impacts of losing such personnel?

Answer: