

NACA

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House T&I Committee Approves FAA Reauthorization Bill

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved bipartisan FAA reauthorization legislation on June 14 after considering more than 150 amendments over the two-day markup. The approved bill included many NACA policy priorities, such as raising the mandatory retirement age for commercial pilots, allowing additional hours of training on advanced flight simulators and directing the FAA to hire the maximum number of controllers that it can train on an annual basis. The bill also would not apply flight and duty time limits to commercial cargo pilots, would hold the line on the industry's tax burden, and repealed DOT's Full Fare Advertising Rule. The bill is expected to go to the House floor in late July.

Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Chair Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) postponed the Senate markup over partisan disagreements on a number of amendments. We will continue our advocacy efforts with committee and member staff, and coordinate with A4A, CAA, and RAA prior to the rescheduled markup, which likely will be in mid-July.

NACA Fundraiser for Senator Cruz

NACA held a cocktail reception on June 7 to raise funds for Senate Commerce Committee Ranking Member Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who is well-positioned to muster Republican opposition to legislative efforts on consumer issues and to apply flight and duty time limits to cargo pilots.

FAA Administrator Nominee Update

We understand the White House removed former FAA Deputy Administrator Mike Whitaker from consideration to be the next FAA Administrator under pressure from labor unions. Remaining candidates include NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy and recently named Deputy FAA Administrator Katie Thomson. DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg designated DOT Deputy Secretary Polly Trottenberg to serve as Acting FAA Administrator after Billy Nolen stepped down earlier this month.

DOT Secretary Buttigieg on Summer Air Traffic Control Challenges

George Novak joined A4A CEO Nick Calio, RAA President Faye Black, and several airline CEOs on a call with DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg and other Administration officials on June 9 to discuss ways that industry and government can work together to ensure that the rest of the summer air travel season goes as smoothly as possible. George noted that ULCCs have reduced their summer schedules and increased staffing to help reduce stress on the ATC system and accommodate strong air travel demand. He urged the FAA to continue increasing controller staffing in Florida, provide more advanced notice of commercial space launches to airlines, and secure access to DOD airspace during peak air travel periods.

Mexico City Cargo Operations

DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg recently held a call with associations and impacted carriers on the Mexican government's plan to force cargo carrier operations from Mexico City International Airport (MEX) to Felipe Angeles International Airport (NLU). Secretary Buttigieg indicated he is working directly with the highest levels of the Mexican government to extend the deadline for carriers to make this transition. We expect more details from DOT in the coming weeks.

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NACA on DOT Working Group

The Department of Transportation has invited Paul Doell to participate in a new working group to implement facets of the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA). In particular, the ACAA Advisory Committee recommended that DOT lead the coordination of a public awareness campaign to educate the traveling public on different types and levels of accommodations that airlines can provide to passengers with disabilities. This working group will implement this recommendation with the goal of launching the public awareness campaign on or before the October 2, 2023 anniversary of ACAA's passage.

FAA Reauthorization Cargo Wins

Among the more than 150 amendments considered during the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee markup of the FAA Reauthorization bill were two of particular concern to the cargo industry. One would have placed cargo pilots under the Part 117 rules for flight and duty time which govern passenger pilots. The second intended to require hardened cockpit doors for cargo aircraft. Both amendments were ultimately withdrawn from consideration. It's likely that these amendments will resurface when the Senate marks up its version of the bill at some point in July; we don't yet know whether it's likely that they will be included in the final Senate version.

5G Deadline

The deadline for air carriers to upgrade altimeters to prevent or mitigate 5G interference is July 1, 2023, which creates obstacles for some of our members. In some cases, supply chain issues are preventing installation of upgraded altimeters in all affected Boeing aircraft by the deadline. In other cases, no technical solution exists to upgrade the avionics in certain Boeing aircraft which would allow them to safely fly without significant 5G-imposed restrictions. NACA has been working alongside the affected members with the FAA to develop an Alternate Means of Compliance (AMOC) that would allow operators to safely fly the aircraft.

New JIMDAT Co-chairs

The Joint Implementation Measurement Data Analysis Team (JIMDAT) is in the process of replacing both its industry and government co-chairs. The FAA co-chair is new to JIMDAT and has only attended one meeting. The current industry co-chair from ALPA is stepping down, leaving an opening for a position with a four-year term that can be extended. Airline representatives are submitting a candidate from Delta to be the JIMDAT co-chair, while labor already has submitted their candidate to fill the position. The labor candidate has been attending JIMDAT for the past 6 years and may hold an advantage in the selection process.

Pilot Fatigue Working Group (PFWG)

The PFWG has met twice under a charter that was agreed to by the JIMDAT. However, labor groups have insisted on a tri-chair arrangement to ensure that labor would have a leadership position. At the June 1 CAST Executive Committee meeting, the FAA committed to propose changes to the agreement and send it to JIMDAT for review prior to a vote at the August 3 CAST meeting. At this stage, it's unclear what changes the FAA will propose, or whether the Subject Matter Experts appointed to the group will accept these changes. We will have an update after the August CAST meeting.

NACA Council meetings – NACA will be hosting Operations, Maintenance and Safety Council meetings during the last week of July. The chairs discussed topics for the agenda and will send them to their full councils for input and additional topics. Once the agendas are complete, NACA will arrange for the appropriate FAA personnel to attend.