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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515-1901

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET  
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CO-CHAIR

April 16, 2008

Mr. Robert A. Sturgell  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Acting Administrator Sturgell:

I am writing today to express my concerns about recent actions the Federal Aviation Administration has taken and the lack of oversight that is occurring over airlines in the U.S. I am also troubled by the treatment of air traffic controllers which creates potentially dangerous working conditions in air traffic control towers. Finally, I have serious concerns about implementation plans of the NextGen Air Traffic Control System in airports in Maine.

Safety should be the FAA's primary objective at all times, not simply when Congress shines a spotlight on lax enforcement. Unfortunately, this was not the case. Recent flight cancellations by American Airlines and Southwest due to safety concerns were a direct result of extreme actions and a perpetual lack of oversight from the FAA. After Congressional hearings by the House Committee on Transportation, the FAA reacted by changing safety rules without allowing airlines time to comply with these new rules. More than 3,000 flights were cancelled and an estimated 300,000 passengers delayed or rerouted. Beyond the inconveniences, millions of dollars in excess costs to the airlines and many times that to the economy in lost productivity were the result of changing safety rules to react to a public relations nightmare. These rules should have been in place long ago.

In addition to inadequate oversight of repairs I am also deeply concerned about the management of our nation's air traffic controllers. Since a collective bargaining agreement was imposed by the FAA two years ago, pay has steadily declined to the point that it is exceedingly difficult to recruit and retain employees in Maine's airports. I have received reports that the air traffic control towers in Portland and Bangor are constantly short-staffed. Not only does this place an unfair burden on air traffic controllers who must work extra shifts and who cannot take a vacation except by requesting it one year in advance, it also creates potentially dangerous situations in which air traffic controllers are forced to work shifts whether or not they feel adequately trained and rested.

I have also received indications that the Portland Jetport and Bangor Airport are not on track to become NextGen compliant. I would appreciate an update on the FAA's plans for making these airports, which are vital to Maine's economy, compliant with new technologies as part of the NextGen plan.

In conclusion, I urge the FAA to provide more stringent, consistent oversight of our nation's air travel industry and maintain standards that assure the American people that flying is safe again. I also ask for a plan to be formed and delivered to me to increase recruitment and retention of air traffic controllers.

Thank you for your cooperation and time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Allen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and the last name "Allen" clearly distinguishable.

Thomas H. Allen  
Member of Congress