



May 20, 2009

## An Open Letter to the U.S. House of Representatives: Vote NO on H.R. 915

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the 362,000 members of the National Taxpayers Union (NTU), I urge you to keep taxpayers in mind as you debate and vote on H.R. 915, the Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2009. As it is currently written, the legislation fails to effectively address reforms needed for the sustainability of safe and efficient air travel. Our members hope you will consider the following recommendations as this bill approaches the floor:

**Don't place an even heavier tax burden on American air passengers.** H.R. 915 would pave the way for an increase in the maximum Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) from the current \$4.50 up to \$7.00. Doing so would impose an additional and unwarranted \$2 billion-per-year tax on commercial passengers, who often must currently bear total air travel tax loads of 20 percent or more. While the PFC was created for the purpose of enhancing airport capacity and functionality, the funds are too often used to subsidize non-essential programs. A March 2007 report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimated that from 2001-2005, airports received an average of \$13 billion each year from the Airport Improvement Program – hardly a massive shortchanging of the aviation community. Congress can rein in unbridled spending by subjecting airport funding to greater cost-benefit analysis.

**Don't undermine the contract between the FAA and air traffic controllers.** Section 601 of H.R. 915 would essentially replace the 2006 contract between the FAA and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association with one that was created back in 1998. This would be a mistake because the 2006 agreement – legitimately negotiated – is already on track to save taxpayers \$7.5 billion over the next ten years. Forcing the FAA into a more expensive contract will not only limit its ability to invest in vital modernization, but will also provide the union with entirely too much control over work rules and schedules.

**Take cues from our global allies and move toward air traffic control reform.** A private sector-driven air traffic control system would allow the aviation industry to attract the best and brightest managers and engineers – those with the skills to implement complex technology projects that bring us one step closer to long-term reform. A 2005 GAO report found that privatized air traffic control systems, as utilized by Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, facilitate better safety, cost control, and modernization. If America is to be a beacon of free markets and innovation, we cannot squander another four years while even command-economy nations move toward efficient, state-of-the-art air traffic control models.

NTU strongly supports efforts to protect taxpayers and establish a user-oriented air traffic control network. As currently crafted, H.R. 915 would raise taxes, reduce incentives to prioritize infrastructure funding, and deliberately disregard the proven success of customer-centric air traffic control reform. **Any roll call votes related to these provisions, including substitute legislation and final passage, will be significantly weighted in our annual Rating of Congress.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan Forbes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Jordan Forbes  
Federal Government Affairs Manager