



National Air Traffic Controllers Association

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Air Traffic Controllers, Pilots, Flight Attendants Detail Serious Safety Concerns Due to Shutdown

Washington, D.C. — On Day 33 of the government shutdown, National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) President Paul Rinaldi, Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) President Joe DePete, and Association of Flight Attendants-CWA (AFA) President Sara Nelson released the following statement:

“We have a growing concern for the safety and security of our members, our airlines, and the traveling public due to the government shutdown. This is already the longest government shutdown in the history of the United States and there is no end in sight. In our risk averse industry, we cannot even calculate the level of risk currently at play, nor predict the point at which the entire system will break. It is unprecedented.

“Due to the shutdown, air traffic controllers, transportation security officers, safety inspectors, air marshals, federal law enforcement officers, FBI agents, and many other critical workers have been working without pay for over a month. Staffing in our air traffic control facilities is already at a 30-year low and controllers are only able to maintain the system’s efficiency and capacity by working overtime, including 10-hour days and 6-day workweeks at many of our nation’s busiest facilities. Due to the shutdown, the FAA has frozen hiring and shuttered its training academy, so there is no plan in effect to fill the FAA’s critical staffing need. Even if the FAA were hiring, it takes two to four years to become fully facility certified and achieve Certified Professional Controller (CPC) status. Almost 20% of CPCs are eligible to retire today. There are no options to keep these professionals at work without a paycheck when they can no longer afford to support their families. When they elect to retire, the National Airspace System (NAS) will be crippled.

“The situation is changing at a rapid pace. Major airports are already seeing security checkpoint closures, with many more potentially to follow. Safety inspectors and federal cyber security staff are not back on the job at pre-shutdown levels, and those not on furlough are working without pay. Last Saturday, TSA management announced that a growing number of officers cannot come to work due to the financial toll of the shutdown. In addition, we are not confident that system-wide analyses of safety reporting data, which is used to identify and implement corrective actions in order to reduce risks and prevent accidents is 100 percent operational due to reduced FAA resources.

“As union leaders, we find it unconscionable that aviation professionals are being asked to work without pay and in an air safety environment that is deteriorating by the day. To avoid disruption to our aviation system, we urge Congress and the White House to take all necessary steps to end this shutdown immediately. “

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ABOUT NATCA

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) is a labor union and aviation safety organization in the United States that represents nearly 20,000 highly skilled air traffic controllers, engineers, and other aviation safety-related professionals. NATCA was certified in 1987 by the Federal Labor Relations Authority to be the exclusive bargaining representative for air traffic controllers employed by the Federal Aviation Administration. Today, NATCA is one of the strongest labor unions in

the federal sector and represents a range of aviation safety professionals in 15 FAA bargaining units, 4 Department of Defense air traffic facilities, and 102 federal contract towers. These air traffic controllers and other aviation safety professionals make vital contributions to the U.S. economy and make modern life possible by coordinating the safe, orderly, and expeditious movement of nearly one billion aviation passengers and millions of tons of freight within the National Airspace System each year. NATCA is headquartered in Washington, D.C., and is affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

ABOUT ALPA

Founded in 1931, ALPA is the world's largest pilot union, representing more than 61,000 pilots at 33 airlines in the United States and Canada. Visit the ALPA website at www.alpa.org or follow us on Twitter @WeAreALPA.

ABOUT AFA

The Association of Flight Attendants is the Flight Attendant union. Focused 100 percent on Flight Attendant issues, AFA has been the leader in advancing the Flight Attendant profession for 73 years. Serving as the voice for Flight Attendants in the workplace, in the aviation industry, in the media and on Capitol Hill, AFA has transformed the Flight Attendant profession by raising wages, benefits and working conditions. Nearly 50,000 Flight Attendants come together to form AFA, part of the 700,000-member strong Communications Workers of America (CWA), AFL-CIO. Visit us at www.afacwa.org.