



Congressional Leaders Reach Bipartisan Agreement on FAA Reauthorization

Late Friday night, congressional conferees reached agreement on an FAA reauthorization bill that will provide stable funding for the agency through 2023. The full text of the FAA bill, 600+ pages, was released at 3 a.m. Saturday. The House and Senate will vote as soon as this week and passage is expected.

Most importantly for PASS members, the bipartisan agreement does not include any attempt to privatize the air traffic control system, something the union has been fighting for years. “The Senate never included privatization in its legislation this year,” said National President Mike Perrone. “When the House dropped its plans to include privatization in February, we were confident that our efforts to defeat this misguided proposal made a significant impact.”

While unrelated to the FAA, the bill includes \$1.68 billion in immediate disaster relief funding in the wake of the Hurricane Florence, which is a concrete incentive for swift passage.

Although the House overwhelmingly passed its version of an FAA reauthorization bill earlier this year, the Senate struggled to bring its legislation to the floor for a full vote due to several contentious policy riders. Bipartisan compromises were reached on many of those to allow the committee members to come to agreement.

Lawmakers included several provisions in the bill that PASS supported, such as updating the safety critical staffing model, enhancing technical training and reviewing the recruiting, hiring and training of aviation safety inspectors. Additionally, the legislation addresses concerns about increased airport noise caused by new flight paths necessitated by the implementation of the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) to modernize the air traffic control system.

Other safety-related provisions that PASS supported on behalf of other aviation unions are also included. Flight attendants won their fight to increase the amount of rest required between shifts and pilots won their effort to strike language that would have allowed single pilot crews on cargo planes.

There are also a number of consumer-friendly provisions, including setting new minimum requirements for seats and legroom, prohibiting airlines from involuntarily bumping passengers who are already onboard the plane, and establishing an aviation consumer advocate at the Department of Transportation.

PASS applauds the bipartisan leadership in both the House and Senate who negotiated this agreement. Thanks to Representatives Bill Shuster (R-Pa.), Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), Frank LoBiondo (R-N.J.) and Rep. Rick Larsen (D-Wash.), in the House, and Senators John Thune (R-S.D.), Bill Nelson (D-Fla.), Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) and Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), in the Senate.