

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 4, 2014

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development,  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development,  
and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Ranking Member Shelby, Chairman Murray and Ranking Member Collins:

As you consider the Fiscal Year 2015 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we urge you to include language ensuring full and dedicated funding for the Contract Tower Program as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2015 budget for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The President's FY 2015 Budget request proposes to eliminate the guaranteed funding language.

Full and dedicated funding for the Contract Tower Program is critical to ensuring that operations continue through FY 2015 at the 252 Federal Aviation Administration contract towers across the country. Restricting or reducing the operations of contract towers would have a substantial and serious impact on general aviation safety, the efficiency of large commercial airports, emergency medical operations, law enforcement, agriculture activities and businesses throughout the United States.

In response to mandatory sequestration cuts in 2013, FAA proposed to eliminate funding for 149 contract towers in the program, a disproportional cut that far exceeded the reductions to most areas of the agency's budget. If implemented, this dramatic cut and the closure of the identified towers would have increased traffic at the remaining contract and FAA-operated towers and hindered the safety and integrity of general aviation operations. The contract tower program is one of the FAA's most cost-effective programs. Contract towers handle approximately 28 percent of the nation's air traffic control tower operations but they account for only 14 percent of the FAA's total tower operations budget. Additionally, the average contract tower operates at one-third the cost of a federal control tower, though it is held to the same standard of excellence.

Providing full and dedicated funding language for the Contract Tower Program is necessary to ensure FAA appropriately treats the program as it manages the budgetary constraints of the coming fiscal year. It will provide certainty to local communities and protect this important and

long-standing aviation safety program from being targeted for disproportionate cuts or elimination of service at certain airports.

Congress provided for the guaranteed funding of the FAA Contract Tower Program in FY 2014. To ensure the continuation of the Contract Tower Program in FY 2015, we urge you to provide full and dedicated funding for the program of \$149 million, while specifically including the following under the FAA "Operations" heading:


*Provided further, That of the funds appropriated under this heading, not less than \$149,000,000 shall be for the contract tower program, of which \$9,500,000 is for the contract tower cost share program.*

Contract towers have played a central role for the past 30 years in efforts to manage the safety and efficiency of our nation's complex airspace. We look forward to working with you to ensure their future success.

Sincerely,



James M. Inhofe  
United States Senator



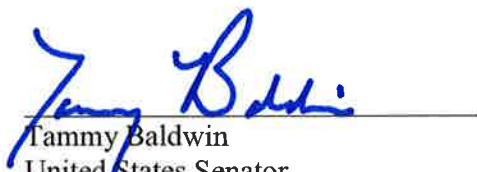
Joe Manchin III  
United States Senator



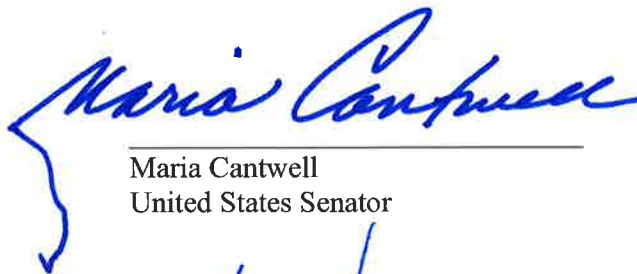
Kelly Ayotte  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Tom Harkin  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



Mazie Hirono  
United States Senator



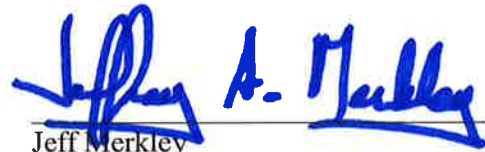
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United States Senator



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