

March 17, 2015

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
2406 RHOB  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

**Similar letter sent to Representatives Diaz-Balart, Lowey, Price, and Senators Cochran, Mikulski, Collins, and Reed**

Dear Chairman Rogers:

As the Committee develops the Department of Transportation/Federal Aviation Administration FY 2016 appropriations bill, the organizations listed below urge your support for the following bill language under the FAA "Operations" section that would provide dedicated funding for the Contract Tower Program:

*Provided further, That of the funds appropriated under this heading, not less than \$154,400,000 shall be for the fully funded and cost-share towers in the contract tower program.*

Events of the past couple of years have made it abundantly clear that the FAA Contract Tower Program enjoys strong bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress. We urge you to dedicate full funding to the program for FY 2016 and extend the bill language that was adopted in the FY 2015 spending bill. This funding level will maintain operations of all current contact towers and applicable new facilities that FAA expects to add to the program by the end of FY 2016.

The FAA Contract Tower Program has provided cost-effective and essential air traffic safety services since 1982. Currently, 252 smaller airports in 46 states participate in the program, including two in Kentucky. Together these 252 towers handle approximately 28 percent of all air traffic control tower (ATCT) aircraft operations in the U.S. but only account for about 14 percent of FAA's overall budget allotted to ATCT tower operations. More importantly, the safety and efficiency record of the FAA Contract Tower Program has been validated numerous times by the DOT Inspector General, as well as by FAA safety audits.

All federal contract controllers are FAA-certified air traffic controllers who meet the identical training and operating standards as FAA-employed controllers. The vast majority of federal contract controllers are former FAA controllers or veterans with prior military air traffic control experience. FAA controls and oversees all aspects of the Contract Tower Program, including operating procedures, staffing plans, certification and medical tests of contract controllers, security and facility evaluations. Moreover, federal contract towers operate together with FAA-staffed facilities throughout the country as part of a unified national air traffic control system.

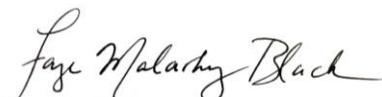
As a result of this 32-year government/industry partnership, the FAA Contract Tower Program: (1) enhances aviation safety at smaller airports that otherwise would not have a tower; (2) provides significant cost savings to FAA and taxpayers; (3) helps small airports with retaining and developing commercial air service and general aviation; (4) promotes economic development and creates jobs in local communities; (5) connects smaller airports and communities with the national air transportation system, and (6) consistently receives high marks for customer service from aviation users and pilots. The bottom line is that, absent this highly successful partnership, many local communities and smaller airports would not receive the significant safety benefits of ATC services.

We thank you for your continued support of this important ATC safety program and look forward to working with you and your staff to ensure its future success.

Sincerely,



J. Spencer Dickerson  
Executive Director, U.S. Contract Tower Association  
An affiliate organization of the American Association  
of Airport Executives



Faye Malarkey Black  
Interim President  
Regional Airline Association

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CEO and President  
National Air Transportation Association



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President & CEO  
National Business Aviation Association



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National Association of State Aviation Officials



Kevin M. Burke  
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Peter F. Dumont  
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Stephen A. Alterman  
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