

From: Transportation Committee Republicans
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**TRANSPORTATION
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SAM GRAVES, CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

Chairman Graves Op-Ed: One Big Beautiful Bill Act provides a flight path for a modern air traffic control system

For Immediate Release: May 21, 2025

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Washington, D.C. - As the House of Representatives prepares to vote on the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act*, the *Washington Times* today published an op-ed by Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) about how the investments in the legislation will help modernize America's air traffic control system.

[One Big Beautiful Bill Act provides a flight path for a modern air traffic control system](#)

By: Sam Graves - May 21, 2025

This has been a difficult year for U.S. aviation, with a string of tragic crashes that have killed passengers and crew. Additionally, we have seen reports about failing technology that has caused repeated air traffic control outages and flight delays. Meanwhile, a shortage of certified air traffic controllers has put additional strain on our aviation system.

President Trump, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and House Republicans are saying "enough is enough," and we are doing something about it.

This week, the House of Representatives is considering the *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* under the budget reconciliation process. This bill includes \$12.5 billion to begin the long-overdue down payment on modernizing our nation's air traffic control system.

The Federal Aviation Administration has been trying to modernize our air traffic control system for decades, but those efforts have fallen short. In 1995, the Government Accountability Office labeled the FAA's efforts to modernize our air traffic control system, often called NextGen, as "high risk."

The result of these failures is a system that relies on outdated technology, including floppy disks and a copper wire telecommunications system, that costs the FAA more than \$100 million monthly in maintenance and obsolescence fees alone. The American aviation system is in dire need of an overhaul. The average age of an air traffic control tower in the United States is 40, and the majority of radar systems are approaching 40 years.

As a professional pilot and the chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I find this wholly unacceptable.

To address these issues, Congress passed the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024*, which included provisions to bolster aviation safety. The law required the FAA to hire the maximum number of graduates from the agency's air traffic control training academy. It also required the FAA to audit all legacy systems in use and develop a plan to accelerate their replacement.

Thankfully, Mr. Trump and Mr. Duffy have prioritized the staffing and modernization of the air traffic control system. Earlier this year, Mr. Duffy began his initiative to supercharge the hiring and training of air traffic controllers by increasing salaries for trainees by 30% and streamlining the hiring process. This enabled the FAA to refer more than 8,320 candidates to take the aptitude assessment. The FAA is on track to hire at least 2,000 controllers this year.

On May 8, Mr. Duffy publicly outlined his ambitious plan to ensure air traffic control modernization during Mr. Trump's term of office. The federal government has grappled with this issue since I first came to Congress in 2001, but I can honestly say I've never seen this level of commitment from an administration.

Working hand in hand with the Trump administration, House Republicans are taking further action.

The *One Big Beautiful Bill Act* provides a substantial \$12.5 billion down payment on the Trump administration's plans. This investment will fund the replacement of air traffic control towers and terminal radar approach control facilities, radar systems, telecommunications infrastructure and runway safety projects, as well as recruitment, retention, training and advanced training technologies for air traffic controllers.

One of the many reasons I support this critical legislation, which will advance the president's "America First" agenda, is that it will finally lead to the modern air traffic control system that American aviation desperately needs.

Rep. Sam Graves is a Republican representing Missouri's 6th Congressional District. He is chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

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