

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION**

Nomination Hearing
Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at 10:00 A.M.

REPUBLICAN QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Mr. Bryan Bedford

COVER PAGE

SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN (R-AK)

Biden Rules Crushing Guide Operations:

A few of our lodge operators have been advised that the FAA will begin enforcing requirements brought about by changes to FAA legal interpretations and policy decisions adopted during the Biden Administration, but which has not been enforced until now.

There has been law on the books since 2000 exempting Alaska Guide services from being treated as an air taxi (Part 135), as a flight is incidental to guide service.

The FAA now opines that the statute is not intended to treat these flight operations as incidental to guide and lodge operations in certain circumstances, even though they have historically been exempt from compliance with Part 135.

President Trump has made clear by the February 19, 2025, Executive Order “*Ensuring Lawful Governance and Implementing the President’s ‘Department of Governmental Efficiency’ Deregulation Initiative*” “that the creeping regulatory burdens placed on the public and small businesses in particular is not in the public interest. The President explicitly imposed limitations on adoption of new regulations without reduction of existing regulatory burdens.

President Trump’s Executive Order includes the following language:

‘It is the policy of my Administration to focus the executive branch’s limited enforcement resources on regulations squarely authorized by constitutional Federal statutes, and to commence the deconstruction of the overbearing and burdensome administrative state.’

The same Executive Order includes this language regarding reduction of regulatory burdens, specifically targeting the following:

“regulations that impose significant costs upon private parties that are not outweighed by public benefits;”

- Will you commit to work with the Alaska Professional Hunters Association and the guide industry to review this new interpretation that is threatening the business operations of these fishing and hunting guide businesses, so that they can to continue to operate safely - as they have for decades?
- With the appropriate discretion by FAA over safety of operations, it would be consistent with President Trump’s stated policy in the recent Executive Order to weigh the appropriateness of pausing enforcement of this Biden Administration decision pending further review and analysis.

Aircraft Certification:

The 2024 FAA Reauthorization bill including language aimed at improving the aircraft certification process through an independent study on the future state of certification, with the goal of keeping aviation the safest mode of transportation while also bringing needed efficiency to the certification process.

- If confirmed, how will you utilize those findings, and make other improvements, to ensure the FAA upholds a certification process that supports American aviation manufacturing competitiveness in getting new aircraft to market?

SENATOR ERIC SCHMITT (R-MO)

- Critical FAA activities, including the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), are funded by the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. The Trust Fund derives the majority of its revenue from taxes on airline passenger-paid tickets. This excise tax is one of the many ways passengers contribute to the funding of our airports and aviation system. Can you address the importance of the AIP, and will you commit to working with me to ensure the AIP supports investment at Missouri airports such as St. Louis Lambert International Airport, where the needs are significant?
 - Additionally, will you commit to engaging with your counterparts at the Department of the Treasury and the IRS to ensure that the solvency of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund is protected through the equitable collection of excise taxes on mandatory fees (such as so-called “passenger usage fees,” “carrier usage charges”) or any similar mandatory fee scheme that the IRS has already stated are subject to the excise tax?
- A few years ago, the aviation industry encountered operational disruptions and unexpected costs that could have been avoided as a result of the deployment of 5G. As the FCC looks to advance additional spectrum sales, how would you ensure that the safety of the aviation industry is prioritized? Further, if equipment modifications are necessary, how would you ensure the industry is given sufficient time and resources to accomplish the modifications?
 - Will you commit to making sure the agency remains proactively engaged across industries and with the FCC to prioritize safety?
- Families who’ve lost loved ones in aviation disasters carry a perspective that can’t be replicated, and too often, they’re only consulted after tragedy strikes. If confirmed, will you commit to maintaining regular engagement with victims’ family organizations, not just in the aftermath of crashes, but as a consistent part of the FAA’s safety decision-making process?

SENATOR TIM SHEEHY (R-MT)

- 1.) The FAA is finally moving forward as required under a contract tower pilot program to convert Bozeman airport into a federal tower. Will you work to ensure prompt completion of this transition, and include Missoula and Kalispell airports, which also suffer from insufficient contract tower staffing levels, in the pilot program?
- 2.) Helena Regional Airport is one of two towers nationwide with non-radar approach control despite meeting the FAA's standards for airport radar. Will you commit to working with Helena to design, fund, install, and maintain additional surveillance equipment in their ATC tower?
- 3.) Will you work to update Part 23 and restore American aviation innovation and manufacturing capacity?
- 4.) Do you support maintaining a minimum of two pilots on the flight deck and will you oppose any move to reduced crew efforts at the International Civil Aviation Organization?
- 5.) Do you support more simulation and scenario-based training for pilots?
- 6.) Will you review pending applications for sustainable aviation fuels and technologies awards to ensure a timely and fair response process?

SENATOR SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO (R-WV)

Question 1 – NOTAM Improvement Act Update

Mr. Bedford, thank you for being here today and thank you for the conversation we had last week. I appreciate your deep aviation experience and your willingness to serve.

Senator Klobuchar, Moran, and I worked to get the NOTAM Improvement Act signed into law, and I understand that the system should be fully upgraded by September, but this an important safety system that has failed 2 times this year. I along with Senator Klobuchar and others are still waiting for a response to a letter we sent to the FAA on April 3. But while a new system this year may be a big improvement it may not be perfect and could see challenges when it first is coming online.

- **What do you plan to do on day 1 to bolster the NO-TAM System to ensure there are not future outages and that the new system is a success?**

Question 2 – ATC Upgrade Transparency

There is strong bipartisan support for upgrading our air traffic control system. This is not a new idea as NextGen was first announced nearly 20 years ago and we have not seen the promised benefits.

I commend Secretary Duffy for making this a top priority. One priority I would like to see is transparency when the FAA is spending tons of money for a system upgrade. I have been told this money is hard to track because the way the FAA buys new systems is complex,

- **But do you agree that taxpayers deserve to see how their money is being spent on A-T-C upgrades in a clear way?**

Question 3 – WV Airports

In West Virginia there are 7 commercial service airports but many have aging equipment and some that does not work anymore - like the FAA's lighting tower system at Morgantown Airport that is rusted out and means that more flights will have to be diverted in less than ideal visibility conditions.

There are other examples at my hometown airport in Charleston which has the oldest glide-scope still in use from 1987, its approach lighting system was built in 1958, and its Tower cab is from 1950. It's TRACON ("tray-con") is also from the 50s and would be a great location for expansion.

- **Will you prioritize improving rural airports that have extensive deferred maintenance and broken equipment?**

Question 4 – Pilot Mental Health

One topic I would like to touch on is pilot mental health. It is a very stressful job and while many other fields have benefited from resources in this space a culture of silence still exists for pilots. Many pilots are afraid to admit or be treated for something in the fears that it will penalize their careers.

- **Do you agree that we should work to have an improved mental health system for our pilots?**

Question 5 – WV Flight Schools

In West Virginia we have 2 excellent part 141 pilot schools at Marshall University and at Fairmont State University. These schools are extremely popular, but I have heard of difficulties in getting designated pilot examiners or DPEs to certify new pilots. There have been some changes in the past so that DPEs are not limited to specific states, but that has not served smaller rural states like mine as well as originally thought. We want more qualified pilots to take to the skies and not have to wait and wait to be certified

- **Can you commit to working with me to improve the DPE program and the self-certification option for Part 141 schools?**

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DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

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RANKING MEMBER MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)

1500-hour Rule. Mr. Bedford, you have criticized the 1,500-hour rule, claiming it, quote, “does nothing to further the goal of increased flight safety.” However, since this rule took effect, commercial aviation fatalities have dropped by over 99 percent compared to the two decades prior.

As the FAA Administrator, you would have the authority to award flight credit hours that could allow pilots to get their Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate with less than 1,500 hours of flight time. Your company, Republic Airways (Republic), petitioned the FAA in 2022 for an exemption from the 1,500-hour rule. FAA denied your petition.

Question 1: Mr. Bedford, if confirmed, will you commit not to authorize additional pathways for commercial pilots that would result in a reduction of the 1,500-hour total flight time requirement?

Answer:

Question 2: When we met in my office, you said that concerns about your intentions for the 1500-hour rule were a “distraction.” You could help ease these concerns by committing to recuse yourself for your full 5-year term from working on any petition filed by Republic seeking an exemption from the 1,500-hour rule. Will you make this commitment? If not, please explain why not.

Answer:

Spectrum Auction Impacts on Aviation Safety. Last week, the Commerce Committee released reconciliation text, which was drafted without Democratic Members of this Committee, leaving them out of the discussion. It proposes to sell off at least 100 megahertz in the upper C-Band for high-power use within 2 years. I understand the FCC and telecom industry would like the full 220 megahertz in that band to be auctioned within 2 years.

As you know, this band is directly adjacent to the band that aircraft radio altimeters use, and studies show this will lead to interference. Joint studies by National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the aviation industry, and the Department of Defense have concluded that new radio altimeters will need to be installed on all aircraft to safely operate with this interference.

The standards for those altimeters are not slated to be finalized until 2027 – the same year this band is set to be auctioned. And after that, the FAA must certify the new altimeters, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) must ensure their altimeters are manufactured to meet these certification specifications, and the industry must install them on the commercial fleet.

Question 1: Given our strained air traffic control system, do you believe auctioning the upper C-Band in 2 years would pose a further risk to aviation safety?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you think this could cause a repeat of the chaos we faced in 2021?

Answer:

Question 3: When we met in my office before your hearing, you indicated this proposal would endanger aviation safety and pose serious risk to the flying public. You seemed to walk back this position at the hearing. What changed?

Answer:

Question 4: If confirmed, can we trust that the positions you take on aviation safety matters in private will be the same as those you take in public?

Answer:

Question 5: What technical steps would be necessary to replace existing aircraft altimeters with upgraded altimeters or filters that could tolerate high-power use in an adjacent band?

Answer:

Question 6: How much do you think it would cost to replace existing aircraft altimeters with upgraded altimeters that could tolerate high-power use in an adjacent band?

Answer:

Question 7: How long do you think it would take to replace existing aircraft altimeters with upgraded altimeters that could tolerate high-power use in an adjacent band?

Answer:

ADS-B In and ADS-B Out and the Safe Operation of Shared Airspace Act. The DCA mid-air collision exposed multiple safety oversight failures, such as the Army's routine use of the ADS-B Out exemption, failed oversight of flight routes near DCA, and a lack of coordination between the FAA and Department of Defense. The DCA Families and the Lilley Family deserve our dedicated attention.

I introduced the Safe Operation of Shared Airspace Act earlier this month with Senators Duckworth, Klobuchar, Warnock, Kaine, Warner, and Markey to address specific safety gaps identified by the DCA mid-air collision.

One critical gap is the abuse of the ADS-B Out exemption. While FAA's rule says ADS-B Out deactivation should not be routine, the Army adopted a policy of routinely deactivating ADS-B Out for all missions in the National Capital Region – despite operating in the same airspace as commercial aircraft.

Question 1: Do you agree that the Army and other Federal agencies should not be allowed to operate flights on a routine basis in the National Capital Region unless ADS-B Out is actively transmitting?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you support our bill's efforts to ensure stronger FAA oversight of the ADS-B Out rule and close this ADS-B Out loophole?

Answer:

Question 3: In 2008, the NTSB recommended that FAA mandate ADS-B In, not just ADS-B Out, in controlled airspace. A 2019 NTSB investigation highlighted how ADS-B In traffic alerting systems would have helped prevent a midair collision in Alaska. Our bill would act on NTSB's recommendation to require ADS-B In. Do you believe installing ADS-B In would improve situational awareness for commercial pilots in complex airspace near busy airspace?

Answer:

Question 4: If confirmed, do you commit to working with me and this Committee to advance opportunities to increase the installation of ADS-B In on commercial aircraft for the purposes of improving situational awareness for pilots and safe separation between aircraft?

Answer:

Reforming FAA's Safety Management Systems. FAA's Air Traffic Organization (ATO) has its own Safety Management System (SMS), which is supposed to provide a structured approach to identifying, analyzing, and mitigating safety risks in the National Airspace System. On March 28, 2025, there was a serious close call at DCA between a Delta flight and an Air Force T-38 jet.

On May 1, 2025, we saw yet another incident involving an Army Black Hawk helicopter – this time disrupting two commercial flights coming on approach to DCA. FAA's Aviation Safety Office also has its own SMS. It was troubling to learn from NTSB's investigative report on the DCA collision that so much available safety data on close calls pointed to the possibility of future incidents.

This situation is serious: we need to know the root cause of why warning signs were missed at DCA and if any safety management decisions at the ATO and Aviation Safety Office are affecting FAA's ability to prevent future incidents.

Question 1: Do you think FAA ATO's SMS is working? Why or why not?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you think FAA's Aviation Safety Office's SMS is working? Why or why not?

Answer:

Question 3: Do you believe lines of business within the FAA are coordinating effectively enough with each other to address safety issues managed across different offices at the agency? Why or why not?

Answer:

Question 4: As discussed, I introduced the Safe Operations in Shared Airspace Act, which would establish an expert review panel to ensure an effective and integrated SMS across all FAA offices. If confirmed, will you commit to support the establishment of this expert panel?

Answer:

Arrival Rates at DCA. DCA typically has a maximum arrival rate of 32 commercial flights per hour. In response to the DCA mid-air collision, FAA reduced the hourly arrival rate to be as low as 26. However, both NTSB and FAA have identified that DCA's arrivals are dangerously concentrated in the last 30 minutes of each hour rather than spread evenly throughout the hour.

Given the over 15,000 close proximity events in the three years before the crash, I'm concerned that current arrival management is adding unnecessary risk to the air traffic control system and strain on controllers.

Question 1: Do you believe that stacking flights at the last half of an hour for flight arrivals at DCA – instead of spreading out arrivals throughout the whole hour – is detrimental to safety?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you think this practice of stacking flights is adding strain or workload to controllers' ability to manage air traffic at DCA?

Answer:

Question 3: If confirmed, will you commit to requiring a comprehensive safety review of arrival and departure rates at DCA?

Answer:

Ensuring FAA as a Stronger Safety Regulator. The 737 MAX crashes exposed serious oversight deficiencies at the FAA. And the recent DCA mid-air collision – which exposed multiple safety loopholes – highlights the need for stronger, more proactive FAA oversight.

Question 1: Mr. Bedford, based on your knowledge of the 737 MAX tragedies, what key lessons will shape your approach to leading the FAA, and what type of regulator do you intend to be if confirmed?

Answer:

Question 2: What specific steps will you take to show that you are prioritizing aviation safety above the interests of the airlines and other organizations you have been affiliated with?

Answer:

FAA Oversight of Aviation Manufacturers. Last year, the DOT Inspector General raised serious red flags about FAA's oversight of Boeing. In August 2023 – the same month the defective Alaska Airlines flight 1282 fuselage with faulty rivets was being shipped to Seattle – FAA officials were attempting to delegate to Boeing final safety inspections of aircraft coming off the production line, despite ongoing manufacturing quality issues.

I sent a letter to FAA on this issue in April 2025 to make sure FAA is doing its job to closely analyze and verify Boeing's actions related to delegation. We all want to see engineering and manufacturing excellence restored at Boeing. But this requires stronger oversight from FAA to hold manufacturers to the highest safety standards—and listening to the engineers and whistleblowers who raise safety issues.

Question 1: What do you think are the root causes of FAA's deficient oversight of aviation manufacturers, like those cited in last year's DOT OIG report? How will you fix them?

Answer:

Question 2: In February 2024, former FAA Administrator Whitaker required Boeing to submit a plan to overhaul the company's approach to production quality. He required in-person quarterly visits with Boeing to personally oversee compliance with FAA requirements. If confirmed, will you commit to requiring similar in-person quarterly meetings in order to take a hands-on oversight approach?

Answer:

Question 3: The FAA accepted all of DOT OIG's recommendations and committed to a schedule for implementing them. What will you do to ensure these recommendations are fully implemented and that FAA sustains these process improvements?

Answer:

Spokane Aerospace Tech Hub. Mr. Bedford, advanced aerospace technologies are critical to American competitiveness. The Spokane Aerospace Tech Hub represents a unique national asset – the only U.S. testbed capable of developing next-generation thermoplastic composite aircraft parts like wings, beams, and fuselage components. This technology will create thousands of high-skilled American jobs and ensure we stay ahead of competitors in Europe and Asia who are rapidly advancing these same capabilities.

Question 1: As FAA Administrator, do you support groundbreaking initiatives like the Spokane Tech Hub that strengthen American aerospace leadership and innovation?

Answer:

Single Pilot Commercial Planes. The FAA's European civil aviation authority counterpart – the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) – is acting on a proposal to advance the reduction of the number of pilots required on commercial aircraft during certain periods of flight. EASA is pursuing a certification pathway for extended single-pilot operations prior to the completion of a safety study.

Pilots undergo frequent health exams, and for good reason. But on numerous occasions, commercial pilots have become incapacitated or needed back up to attend to mental health needs during flights. Accidents like the Germanwings flight 9525 tragedy – involving a suicidal pilot, who barred their co-pilot from reentering the flight deck after the co-pilot left – also underscore the need for always ensuring redundancy on the flight deck.

Question 1: In remarks at Liberty University in 2019, you appeared to signal an openness to single pilot commercial airline operations, while also stating “there is no courage of leadership on the Hill right now” to pursue this change. What benefits do you see from single pilot commercial operations and why do you think this is a direction that the aviation industry should be going in?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you have any concerns about the potential impact to passengers' safety from single pilot commercial operations?

Answer:

Question 3: Do you believe it's safer to have pilots rely more on software to make flight decisions on commercial aircraft than well-trained humans?

Answer:

Question 4: If confirmed, will you commit to oppose any effort to move toward single-pilot operations for U.S. commercial passenger flights?

Answer:

Air Traffic Control System Upgrades. The Committee's questionnaire asked why you wished to serve as Administrator. In your response, you identified several factors contributing to FAA's failure in to modernize the air traffic control (ATC) system. You then claimed, “the root cause of FAA's inability to complete its mission to modernize air traffic systems and effectively manage safety is the lack of strategic vision and competent leadership.”

Question 1: What makes you confident your leadership will succeed where previous FAA Administrators have failed?

Answer:

Question 2: Which former FAA Administrators did you consult in arriving at these conclusions about FAA's challenges?

Answer:

Question 3: You mentioned the following contributing factors to the ATC system's persistent problems: 1) lack of budget predictability, 2) lack of staff resources, 3) onerous agreements, 4) chronic age of the facilities, and 5) obsolete current telecommunications technology. What is your specific plan to address problems posed by FAA's aging air traffic facilities?

Answer:

Question 4: Do you support consolidation over replacing outdated towers?

Answer:

FAA Aircraft Certification Staffing. The FAA's budget request for fiscal year 2026 includes funding to hire 32 new Aviation Safety Inspectors and Aviation Safety Engineers for FAA's Aircraft Certification Service.

I understand that senior Aircraft Certification personnel at FAA are concerned that it's difficult to hire new experienced personnel because of the historic pay difference with industry and, more recently, because of the generally negative attitude towards federal employees from this Administration and resulting impediments to hiring. With the retirement of many senior managers and technical experts, finding qualified replacements is more important than ever.

Question 1: What will you do to ensure that FAA recruits and hires qualified people with the necessary expertise to fulfill FAA's aircraft certification responsibilities?

Answer:

Question 2: If the current Administration proposes larger cuts in FAA's workforce, would you voice opposition to those ideas if you knew the FAA would be harmed by them?

Answer:

Implementing the FAA Law – Whistleblower Protections. FAA Administrators have repeatedly testified before this Committee that retaliation against whistleblowers who report safety concerns will not be tolerated. But FAA has had legal authority to impose civil penalties against companies that retaliate against individuals who report safety concerns since 2000 but has rarely used it.

That's why we took action in our 2024 FAA law and gave FAA additional authority to impose civil penalties through its administrative enforcement program. Despite this effort, the FAA recently took the position that it still had no such authority.

Question 1: Yes or no, if confirmed, do you commit to using FAA's enforcement authority against companies that retaliate against individuals who report safety concerns?

Answer:

Contract Tower and Contract Weather Observer Programs. The FAA has two successful government-industry partnerships in the Contract Tower and Contract Weather Observer programs. The contract tower program provides vital air traffic safety services with 265 smaller airports participating in the program, including seven in Washington. These towers support Department of Defense flight training operations and military readiness, general aviation and rural air service operations, and flight schools all across the country. Contract towers account for approximately 30 percent of all tower operations in the nation, and about 70 percent of contract controllers are veterans. The program also continues to get high marks from the DOT Inspector General. Similarly, the contract weather observer program supports weather observers at 135 airports nationwide, providing essential manual observations that supplement the automated weather observation systems.

Question 1: What assurances can you give me and my colleagues that contract towers will be a high priority for you?

Answer:

Question 2: Staffing shortages continue to be a challenge throughout the industry, including contract towers. What measures can FAA and the industry undertake collaboratively to address staffing challenges at these towers?

Answer:

Question 3: Given the numerous runway incursion close calls we have seen in the past few years, including those due to weather conditions, can you elaborate on why it is necessary that the FAA continue to maintain the Contract Weather Observer program to ensure that there is a human visual backup for aircraft safety considering that the Automated Surface/Weather Observing Systems (ASOS/AWOS) have technological limitations?

Answer:

Commercial Space Transportation Regulations. Mr. Bedford, Under the Commercial Space Launch Act of 1984 (51 U.S.C. § 50901), the Secretary of Transportation must oversee the conduct of commercial launch and reentry operations and issue licenses authorizing those operations, as well as facilitate, and promote the U.S. commercial space transportation sector. In

1995, the Secretary delegated this responsibility to the FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation (AST).

In the last several years, the launch industry has been growing increasingly frustrated with perceived delays in processing licenses and approving launches and reentries. These problems will only get worse as the commercial space industry grows.

Last year, the office licensed 156 launches, which is a 33 percent increase from 2023, and a 97 percent increase from 2022. 85 percent of last year's licensed launches were conducted by SpaceX, including 4 Starship launches, which means that SpaceX receives more time and attention from the FAA than any other launch company.

Question 1: Will you commit to ensuring that the Office of Commercial Space Transportation remains sufficiently staffed to be responsive to the needs of the entire commercial space launch industry while also protecting public safety?

Answer:

Question 2: Smaller innovators and new start commercial space companies often struggle to compete against well established players. What role do you see the FAA playing in ensuring the government fosters a diversified ecosystem of space providers to increase resiliency and reduce dependency on any single company?

Answer:

Elon Musk. Mr. Bedford, although it seems Elon Musk will be spending less time in Washington at least in the near term, DOGE's harmful impacts are still being felt throughout the federal government. We need an FAA Administrator who will do what's right for aviation safety—not what Elon Musk's embedded team of DOGE staffers might tell them to do.

Question 1: I understand Mr. Musk contacted you directly when you were under consideration for the FAA Administrator position. Please describe this conversation and specify when it occurred.

Answer:

Question 2: Did Mr. Musk raise DOGE's plans for FAA? If so, please describe what was discussed.

Answer:

Question 3: Did Mr. Musk raise the state of FAA's workforce? If so, please describe what was discussed.

Answer:

Question 4: Did Mr. Musk raise any issue related to FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation? If so, please describe what was discussed.

Answer:

Question 5: Did Mr. Musk raise any other FAA office, program, or policy? If so, please specify and describe what was discussed.

Answer:

Question 6: Did you disagree with any views Mr. Musk expressed about FAA? If so, please specify which views and why.

Answer:

Question 7: Did you think it was appropriate for Mr. Musk to contact you like this?

Answer:

Question 8: Did Mr. Musk contact you at any other time after your nomination was announced? If so, please describe any such conversation and specify when it occurred.

Answer:

Credentials. Mr. Bedford, you said "transparency" is one of the top challenges facing the FAA. We absolutely need a leader at the agency who is transparent and does not misrepresent the facts. I am concerned, however, that you have not always been fully candid about your background.

For years, the biography on your company's website represented that you hold "commercial" pilot ratings. It said this as recently as December 2024. But now that you have been nominated to lead FAA, this credential has been scrubbed from your online biography.

Question 1: Mr. Bedford, you do not currently hold commercial pilot ratings, correct?

Answer:

Question 2: You never held commercial pilot ratings, correct?

Answer:

Question 3: But as recently as October 2019, you indicated during remarks at Liberty University that you had commercial pilot ratings, stating: "Between like, 1994-1997, I went through private, instrument, multi-engine, *commercial*, and by the time we got to our next labor negotiation three years later, *I had all my ratings.*" Why did you claim to have commercial pilot ratings at this time?

Answer:

Question 4: In declarations filed with a federal bankruptcy court in 2016 and 2017, respectively, you declared under penalty of perjury: “[I] am a licensed pilot and *certified public accountant*.” However, although you obtained a CPA license in 1986, your license was “null and void” as of 1987. Mr. Bedford, you have not been authorized to practice as a CPA for over 25 years, correct?

Answer:

Question 5: I understand mistakes happen, but we need an FAA Administrator who won’t play fast and loose with the facts. Will you commit to being fully transparent with Congress from the outset, even when the facts are inconvenient?

Answer:

Prior Support for Diversity Initiatives. Mr. Bedford, in your company’s April 2022 petition for an exemption from the 1500-hour rule, you argued that granting your petition would help advance a “renewed industry-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.” And you acknowledged in your petition that promoting access for underrepresented groups, particularly minorities and women, would have “no adverse impact on safety.”

Question 1: Based on your petition, you must agree that we can promote diversity and access to aviation professions for underrepresented groups, including minorities and women, without compromising safety, correct?

Answer:

SENATOR EDWARD MARKEY (D-MA)

Question 1: Will you commit to recuse yourself from working on any matter involving Republic during your full tenure as Administrator?

Question 2: When officials from the FAA appeared before the Senate Commerce Committee last month, they said they had conducted an analysis of the effects of DOGE workforce cuts and delayed resignation offers on aviation safety.

They promised to share that analysis but have not yet done so.

If confirmed, can you commit to sharing that analysis with the Committee?

SENATOR GARY PETERS (D-MI)

1. Mr. Bedford, the FAA Reauthorization Act includes provisions I championed to ensure a quick transition to new non-PFAS firefighting foam and to provide financial resources to airports to help make that transition. To do that, we need to fund the PFAS Replacement Program for Airports.
 - a. If confirmed, will you commit to moving this program?
 - b. Additionally, if confirmed, will you advocate for fully funding this program in accordance with Congressional intent to support airports in their transition away from PFAS foams?
2. I am concerned that the Department's Deferred Resignation Program which has resulted in the loss of hundreds of FAA staff will undermine aviation safety and our ability to recruit and retain air traffic controllers. These losses included aeronautical information specialists, technical staff that help operate air traffic control equipment, and staff that hire and conduct background checks on new air traffic controllers.
 - a. Do you agree that the loss of thousands of FAA support staff could undermine aviation safety and your ability to recruit and retain controllers?
 - b. What is your plan to address that concern?
3. As part of the FAA Reauthorization, I authored a provision – with several Republicans on this committee – that instructed DOT to permanently establish the Women in Aviation Advisory Committee. Women make up less than 10% of licensed pilots and less than 3% of aviation maintenance technicians. Recruiting more women is a necessity if we're going to address these workforce shortages.
 - a. If confirmed, do you commit to supporting the implementation of this provision and taking recommendations from the committee into consideration when crafting workforce related policies at the FAA?
4. The U.S. has had a long history of requiring two-pilots on the flight deck for commercial flight operations.
 - a. If confirmed, are you committed to maintaining this standard?

SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH (D-IL)

Question Topic: FAA Staffing

Question 1: If you are confirmed, will you provide me with a list of the job categories at FAA from which employees have been fired and/or accepted deferred resignation, so far, this year – and how many employees in each job category have left or are scheduled to leave the agency?

Answer:

Question 2: FAA has said it is exempting from staff reductions employees who are performing safety critical functions. Yet the overall mission of FAA is safety. What positions at FAA do you believe are **not** safety critical and, in particular, which positions do you believe are **not** safety critical in the following offices:

a. Air Traffic Organization?

Answer:

b. Aviation Safety?

Answer:

c. Airports?

Answer:

d. Audit and Evaluation?

Answer:

e. Security and Hazardous Materials Safety?

Answer:

f. Office of Commercial Space Transportation?

Answer:

Question 3: FAA has a lot of work ahead of it to implement the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. I don't see how staff reductions will help FAA implement the law in full and on time. Can you guarantee to this committee that FAA will implement FAA Reauthorization in full and on time, regardless of staff reductions at FAA?

Answer:

Question Topic: Grants

Question 1: If confirmed, will you commit to disbursing all grant funding that has been awarded to Illinois in full and without undue delay?

Answer:

Question Topic: Accessibility for Passengers with Disabilities

Question 1: According to data from the Department of Transportation, airlines mishandled 11,527 wheelchairs and scooters in 2023, leading to health and safety concerns for passengers with disabilities. In 2024, the Department finalized a rule, which set new, rigorous standards for assistance for passengers with disabilities – particularly those who use wheelchairs, mandated hands-on training for airline employees and contractors who physically assist passengers with disabilities and handle passengers' wheelchairs and specified actions that airlines must take to protect passengers when a wheelchair is damaged or delayed during transport. Notably, some of these requirements were included in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. In February 2025, Airlines for America and its member companies filed a lawsuit with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, arguing that parts of the final regulation are "unlawful."

- a. If confirmed, will you recommend the Department of Transportation maintain the 2024 wheelchair rule and defend the rule against efforts to overturn some or all of it?

Answer:

Question 2: Congress passed the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (PL 118-63), which requires the FAA to issue regulations and guidance to increase safety and accessibility for passengers with disabilities and an aging population. If confirmed as Administrator:

- A. Do you commit to implementing the FAA Reauthorization Act in full and on time, regardless of any Executive Order that may seek to delay or alter the act's implementation as required by law?

Answer:

- B. Do you commit to placing all of the FAA Reauthorization Act's required regulations and guidance on the Unified Regulatory Agenda?

Answer:

- C. Do you commit to enforcing the regulations required by the FAA Reauthorization Act, including the final wheelchair rule mentioned in Question 1 "Wheelchair Rule" above?

Answer:

Question Topic: Sustainable Aviation Fuel

Question 1: In 2021, multiple U.S. federal agencies, including Department of Transportation and specifically the FAA joined an interagency working group to roll out the SAF Grand Challenge. This was a historic government-wide strategy for scaling up production of SAF that reduces cost and expands the use of SAF across the U.S. airline industry, while also growing the domestic biofuels sector. SAF is a bipartisan topic that Senator Moran and I proudly advocate for as co-chairs of the Senate SAF Caucus. SAF production is critical for the aviation industry. It also creates new economic opportunities in agricultural and rural communities while reducing environmental impacts. It also supports U.S. energy independence and global competitiveness. With the goal of 3 billion gallon per year by the 2030 target, it is important that we remain committed to this goal of American grown, American made biofuels.

- a. Do you remain committed to the expansion of domestic SAF production and usage in this country?

Answer:

Question 2: Without the inclusion of U.S. agricultural feedstock for SAF we will miss an incredible economic and environmental opportunity. That being said, some international aviation sectors have chosen to measure their SAF carbon intensity using the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation or "CORSIA". However, domestically we prefer Illinois' Argonne National Laboratories, Department of Energy commissioned the Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Technologies Model or "GREET Model", as it correctly considers sustainable agricultural practices, reduced land and water uses and other relevant considerations in its calculations.

- a. Do you support the U.S. formally adopting the Argonne GREET model to measure our SAF carbon intensity?

Answer:

- b. Do you support the global aviation sector adopting one single model to measure the carbon intensity of SAF?

Answer:

Question Topic: Federal Elections

Question 1: Who won the 2024 U.S. presidential election?

Answer:

Question 2: Who won the 2020 U.S. presidential election?

Answer:

SENATOR BEN RAY LUJÁN (D-NM)

(1) Republic's Petition from 2022 to the FAA said that if granted would "renewed industry-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion."

(a) Do you still support initiatives to help underrepresented groups overcome barriers to the aviation industry?

(b) Was the DCA collision earlier this year caused by DEI policies?

(2) What specific changes will you implement to update the Air Traffic Control systems and technologies, while maintaining or improving safety and reliability?

(3) Under the FAA Reauthorization, the FAA was directed to collaborate with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) on a 12-month-long study focused on unsafe cabin temperatures and conditions. The FAA has recently given an update that they "will finalize an agreement and funding for the project after defining the scope." Will you commit to providing an update about when Congress can expect the findings of this study and what else is the FAA doing to address unsafe cabin temperatures?

(4) How will you collaborate with scientists or research organizations to improve safety, standards, and energy efficiency within the airline industry?

(5) The increase in extreme weather events is causing more delays, cancellations, and hazards for flights. How do you plan to ensure the airline industry is adaptive and resilient to these changes without sacrificing safety?

(6) Did Joe Biden lawfully win the 2020 presidential election?

(7) Did Donald Trump lawfully win the 2024 presidential election?

SENATOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER (D-CO)

Air Traffic Control Outages

Communications outages that impact Air Traffic Control (ATC) operations have continued to increase in their frequency and severity. Recently, the Denver Air Route Traffic Control Center recently had a communications outage that impacted primary and backup communications channels used by ATC personnel. Despite redundant systems for safety, any ATC outage for any duration is unacceptable to the American public.

Question 1: Mr. Bedford, do you believe the FAA accurately records and discloses to the public how often these occur? How could the FAA increase transparency around the impact of ATC communications outages?

Single Pilot Operations

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), of which the U.S. is a founding member, has been investigating “Extended Minimum Crew Operations.” If this rulemaking were advanced, it could allow for one human pilot alongside an autonomous system to operate on the flight deck for a commercial flight.

Question 2: Mr. Bedford, what safety considerations would you direct the FAA to consider and prioritize if this proposal were to advance at the international level? What concerns does this raise for you?

Supersonic Aviation

President Trump issued an Executive Order directing the FAA to (1) repeal the prohibition on overland supersonic flight and (2) establish a noise-based certification standard. While supersonic aviation has the ability to transform our economy and increase access to long-distance destinations, it is of the utmost importance that supersonic aviation is safely integrated into our National Air Space. The FAA plays a key role in entrusting that safe integration takes place while also mitigating noise disturbances.

Question 3: Mr. Bedford, if confirmed, how would you consider noise, airspace integration, and airport infrastructure concerns during this rulemaking?

Artificial Intelligence Integration for ATC Modernization

Artificial intelligence and machine learning are already in use for low-risk use cases by airlines. When applied safely and intentionally, AI has the ability to help improve efficiency and lower costs.

Question 4: Mr. Bedford, as the FAA continues its work towards modernizing the air traffic control system, how would you guide the agency towards integrating AI and machine-based learning to enhance efficiency and safety?

PFAS and Firefighting Foam

For decades, commercial service airports have used fluorinated firefighting foams containing PFAS. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 authorized a new grant program to support airports in transitioning to fluorine-free alternatives.

*Question 5: **Mr. Bedford**, as airports begin to make this transition, what guidance and assistance do you anticipate that the FAA will provide? How will you support airports in this endeavor?*

Grant Requirements

I appreciate your commitment to taking action to improve aviation safety. However, I am concerned that the Department of Transportation and FAA's attempt to impose new mandates that are unrelated to aviation safety in order for airports to receive federal funds will undermine safety.

In September 2023, Denver International Airport (DEN) in Colorado, the nation's third busiest airport, completed Taxiway EE. This safety project, completed with FAA funds, eliminated an identified hot spot and improved airfield efficiency. But if airports like DEN are denied FAA grants for reasons unrelated to aviation, it risks harming the safety of the entire national airspace system.

*Question 6: **Mr. Bedford**, if confirmed, do you pledge to continue to fund critical safety and modernization infrastructure projects without conditioning them on irrelevant requirements?*

Advisory Group Engagement

Following a mid-air collision at Centennial Airport in Colorado in 2021, corrective actions led to a new traffic pattern. This resulted in increased low-flying traffic over local communities and, subsequently, increased noise levels.

The FAA, Centennial Airport, flight schools, and the local community came together to form the Centennial Airport Community Noise Roundtable Study Group Committee. This innovative engagement has been seen as a template for such noise-related aviation concerns across the country. However, earlier this year, FAA involvement in this process was suddenly halted due to an agency-wide prohibition on engagement with such outside groups, regardless of their effectiveness or purpose.

*Question 7: **Mr. Bedford**, if confirmed, will you direct the FAA to continue this important work with community-led organizations so that these aircraft noise mitigation efforts could be replicated elsewhere in Colorado and potentially across the country?*

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION**

Nomination Hearing
Wednesday, June 11, 2025, at 10:00 A.M.

DEMOCRATIC QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Mr. Bryan Bedford

COVER PAGE

RANKING MEMBER MARIA CANTWELL (D-WA)

1500-hour Rule. Mr. Bedford, you have criticized the 1,500-hour rule, claiming it, quote, “does nothing to further the goal of increased flight safety.” However, since this rule took effect, commercial aviation fatalities have dropped by over 99 percent compared to the two decades prior.

As the FAA Administrator, you would have the authority to award flight credit hours that could allow pilots to get their Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate with less than 1,500 hours of flight time. Your company, Republic Airways (Republic), petitioned the FAA in 2022 for an exemption from the 1,500-hour rule. FAA denied your petition.

Question 1: Mr. Bedford, if confirmed, will you commit not to authorize additional pathways for commercial pilots that would result in a reduction of the 1,500-hour total flight time requirement?

Answer:

Question 2: When we met in my office, you said that concerns about your intentions for the 1500-hour rule were a “distraction.” You could help ease these concerns by committing to recuse yourself for your full 5-year term from working on any petition filed by Republic seeking an exemption from the 1,500-hour rule. Will you make this commitment? If not, please explain why not.

Answer:

Spectrum Auction Impacts on Aviation Safety. Last week, the Commerce Committee released reconciliation text, which was drafted without Democratic Members of this Committee, leaving them out of the discussion. It proposes to sell off at least 100 megahertz in the upper C-Band for high-power use within 2 years. I understand the FCC and telecom industry would like the full 220 megahertz in that band to be auctioned within 2 years.

As you know, this band is directly adjacent to the band that aircraft radio altimeters use, and studies show this will lead to interference. Joint studies by National Telecommunications and Information Administration, the aviation industry, and the Department of Defense have concluded that new radio altimeters will need to be installed on all aircraft to safely operate with this interference.

The standards for those altimeters are not slated to be finalized until 2027 – the same year this band is set to be auctioned. And after that, the FAA must certify the new altimeters, original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) must ensure their altimeters are manufactured to meet these certification specifications, and the industry must install them on the commercial fleet.

Question 1: Given our strained air traffic control system, do you believe auctioning the upper C-Band in 2 years would pose a further risk to aviation safety?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you think this could cause a repeat of the chaos we faced in 2021?

Answer:

Question 3: When we met in my office before your hearing, you indicated this proposal would endanger aviation safety and pose serious risk to the flying public. You seemed to walk back this position at the hearing. What changed?

Answer:

Question 4: If confirmed, can we trust that the positions you take on aviation safety matters in private will be the same as those you take in public?

Answer:

Question 5: What technical steps would be necessary to replace existing aircraft altimeters with upgraded altimeters or filters that could tolerate high-power use in an adjacent band?

Answer:

Question 6: How much do you think it would cost to replace existing aircraft altimeters with upgraded altimeters that could tolerate high-power use in an adjacent band?

Answer:

Question 7: How long do you think it would take to replace existing aircraft altimeters with upgraded altimeters that could tolerate high-power use in an adjacent band?

Answer:

ADS-B In and ADS-B Out and the Safe Operation of Shared Airspace Act. The DCA mid-air collision exposed multiple safety oversight failures, such as the Army's routine use of the ADS-B Out exemption, failed oversight of flight routes near DCA, and a lack of coordination between the FAA and Department of Defense. The DCA Families and the Lilley Family deserve our dedicated attention.

I introduced the Safe Operation of Shared Airspace Act earlier this month with Senators Duckworth, Klobuchar, Warnock, Kaine, Warner, and Markey to address specific safety gaps identified by the DCA mid-air collision.

One critical gap is the abuse of the ADS-B Out exemption. While FAA's rule says ADS-B Out deactivation should not be routine, the Army adopted a policy of routinely deactivating ADS-B Out for all missions in the National Capital Region – despite operating in the same airspace as commercial aircraft.

Question 1: Do you agree that the Army and other Federal agencies should not be allowed to operate flights on a routine basis in the National Capital Region unless ADS-B Out is actively transmitting?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you support our bill's efforts to ensure stronger FAA oversight of the ADS-B Out rule and close this ADS-B Out loophole?

Answer:

Question 3: In 2008, the NTSB recommended that FAA mandate ADS-B In, not just ADS-B Out, in controlled airspace. A 2019 NTSB investigation highlighted how ADS-B In traffic alerting systems would have helped prevent a midair collision in Alaska. Our bill would act on NTSB's recommendation to require ADS-B In. Do you believe installing ADS-B In would improve situational awareness for commercial pilots in complex airspace near busy airspace?

Answer:

Question 4: If confirmed, do you commit to working with me and this Committee to advance opportunities to increase the installation of ADS-B In on commercial aircraft for the purposes of improving situational awareness for pilots and safe separation between aircraft?

Answer:

Reforming FAA's Safety Management Systems. FAA's Air Traffic Organization (ATO) has its own Safety Management System (SMS), which is supposed to provide a structured approach to identifying, analyzing, and mitigating safety risks in the National Airspace System. On March 28, 2025, there was a serious close call at DCA between a Delta flight and an Air Force T-38 jet.

On May 1, 2025, we saw yet another incident involving an Army Black Hawk helicopter – this time disrupting two commercial flights coming on approach to DCA. FAA's Aviation Safety Office also has its own SMS. It was troubling to learn from NTSB's investigative report on the DCA collision that so much available safety data on close calls pointed to the possibility of future incidents.

This situation is serious: we need to know the root cause of why warning signs were missed at DCA and if any safety management decisions at the ATO and Aviation Safety Office are affecting FAA's ability to prevent future incidents.

Question 1: Do you think FAA ATO's SMS is working? Why or why not?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you think FAA's Aviation Safety Office's SMS is working? Why or why not?

Answer:

Question 3: Do you believe lines of business within the FAA are coordinating effectively enough with each other to address safety issues managed across different offices at the agency? Why or why not?

Answer:

Question 4: As discussed, I introduced the Safe Operations in Shared Airspace Act, which would establish an expert review panel to ensure an effective and integrated SMS across all FAA offices. If confirmed, will you commit to support the establishment of this expert panel?

Answer:

Arrival Rates at DCA. DCA typically has a maximum arrival rate of 32 commercial flights per hour. In response to the DCA mid-air collision, FAA reduced the hourly arrival rate to be as low as 26. However, both NTSB and FAA have identified that DCA's arrivals are dangerously concentrated in the last 30 minutes of each hour rather than spread evenly throughout the hour.

Given the over 15,000 close proximity events in the three years before the crash, I'm concerned that current arrival management is adding unnecessary risk to the air traffic control system and strain on controllers.

Question 1: Do you believe that stacking flights at the last half of an hour for flight arrivals at DCA – instead of spreading out arrivals throughout the whole hour – is detrimental to safety?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you think this practice of stacking flights is adding strain or workload to controllers' ability to manage air traffic at DCA?

Answer:

Question 3: If confirmed, will you commit to requiring a comprehensive safety review of arrival and departure rates at DCA?

Answer:

Ensuring FAA as a Stronger Safety Regulator. The 737 MAX crashes exposed serious oversight deficiencies at the FAA. And the recent DCA mid-air collision – which exposed multiple safety loopholes – highlights the need for stronger, more proactive FAA oversight.

Question 1: Mr. Bedford, based on your knowledge of the 737 MAX tragedies, what key lessons will shape your approach to leading the FAA, and what type of regulator do you intend to be if confirmed?

Answer:

Question 2: What specific steps will you take to show that you are prioritizing aviation safety above the interests of the airlines and other organizations you have been affiliated with?

Answer:

FAA Oversight of Aviation Manufacturers. Last year, the DOT Inspector General raised serious red flags about FAA's oversight of Boeing. In August 2023 – the same month the defective Alaska Airlines flight 1282 fuselage with faulty rivets was being shipped to Seattle – FAA officials were attempting to delegate to Boeing final safety inspections of aircraft coming off the production line, despite ongoing manufacturing quality issues.

I sent a letter to FAA on this issue in April 2025 to make sure FAA is doing its job to closely analyze and verify Boeing's actions related to delegation. We all want to see engineering and manufacturing excellence restored at Boeing. But this requires stronger oversight from FAA to hold manufacturers to the highest safety standards—and listening to the engineers and whistleblowers who raise safety issues.

Question 1: What do you think are the root causes of FAA's deficient oversight of aviation manufacturers, like those cited in last year's DOT OIG report? How will you fix them?

Answer:

Question 2: In February 2024, former FAA Administrator Whitaker required Boeing to submit a plan to overhaul the company's approach to production quality. He required in-person quarterly visits with Boeing to personally oversee compliance with FAA requirements. If confirmed, will you commit to requiring similar in-person quarterly meetings in order to take a hands-on oversight approach?

Answer:

Question 3: The FAA accepted all of DOT OIG's recommendations and committed to a schedule for implementing them. What will you do to ensure these recommendations are fully implemented and that FAA sustains these process improvements?

Answer:

Spokane Aerospace Tech Hub. Mr. Bedford, advanced aerospace technologies are critical to American competitiveness. The Spokane Aerospace Tech Hub represents a unique national asset – the only U.S. testbed capable of developing next-generation thermoplastic composite aircraft parts like wings, beams, and fuselage components. This technology will create thousands of high-skilled American jobs and ensure we stay ahead of competitors in Europe and Asia who are rapidly advancing these same capabilities.

Question 1: As FAA Administrator, do you support groundbreaking initiatives like the Spokane Tech Hub that strengthen American aerospace leadership and innovation?

Answer:

Single Pilot Commercial Planes. The FAA's European civil aviation authority counterpart – the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) – is acting on a proposal to advance the reduction of the number of pilots required on commercial aircraft during certain periods of flight. EASA is pursuing a certification pathway for extended single-pilot operations prior to the completion of a safety study.

Pilots undergo frequent health exams, and for good reason. But on numerous occasions, commercial pilots have become incapacitated or needed back up to attend to mental health needs during flights. Accidents like the Germanwings flight 9525 tragedy – involving a suicidal pilot, who barred their co-pilot from reentering the flight deck after the co-pilot left – also underscore the need for always ensuring redundancy on the flight deck.

Question 1: In remarks at Liberty University in 2019, you appeared to signal an openness to single pilot commercial airline operations, while also stating “there is no courage of leadership on the Hill right now” to pursue this change. What benefits do you see from single pilot commercial operations and why do you think this is a direction that the aviation industry should be going in?

Answer:

Question 2: Do you have any concerns about the potential impact to passengers' safety from single pilot commercial operations?

Answer:

Question 3: Do you believe it's safer to have pilots rely more on software to make flight decisions on commercial aircraft than well-trained humans?

Answer:

Question 4: If confirmed, will you commit to oppose any effort to move toward single-pilot operations for U.S. commercial passenger flights?

Answer:

Air Traffic Control System Upgrades. The Committee's questionnaire asked why you wished to serve as Administrator. In your response, you identified several factors contributing to FAA's failure in to modernize the air traffic control (ATC) system. You then claimed, “the root cause of FAA's inability to complete its mission to modernize air traffic systems and effectively manage safety is the lack of strategic vision and competent leadership.”

Question 1: What makes you confident your leadership will succeed where previous FAA Administrators have failed?

Answer:

Question 2: Which former FAA Administrators did you consult in arriving at these conclusions about FAA's challenges?

Answer:

Question 3: You mentioned the following contributing factors to the ATC system's persistent problems: 1) lack of budget predictability, 2) lack of staff resources, 3) onerous agreements, 4) chronic age of the facilities, and 5) obsolete current telecommunications technology. What is your specific plan to address problems posed by FAA's aging air traffic facilities?

Answer:

Question 4: Do you support consolidation over replacing outdated towers?

Answer:

FAA Aircraft Certification Staffing. The FAA's budget request for fiscal year 2026 includes funding to hire 32 new Aviation Safety Inspectors and Aviation Safety Engineers for FAA's Aircraft Certification Service.

I understand that senior Aircraft Certification personnel at FAA are concerned that it's difficult to hire new experienced personnel because of the historic pay difference with industry and, more recently, because of the generally negative attitude towards federal employees from this Administration and resulting impediments to hiring. With the retirement of many senior managers and technical experts, finding qualified replacements is more important than ever.

Question 1: What will you do to ensure that FAA recruits and hires qualified people with the necessary expertise to fulfill FAA's aircraft certification responsibilities?

Answer:

Question 2: If the current Administration proposes larger cuts in FAA's workforce, would you voice opposition to those ideas if you knew the FAA would be harmed by them?

Answer:

Implementing the FAA Law – Whistleblower Protections. FAA Administrators have repeatedly testified before this Committee that retaliation against whistleblowers who report safety concerns will not be tolerated. But FAA has had legal authority to impose civil penalties against companies that retaliate against individuals who report safety concerns since 2000 but has rarely used it.

That's why we took action in our 2024 FAA law and gave FAA additional authority to impose civil penalties through its administrative enforcement program. Despite this effort, the FAA recently took the position that it still had no such authority.

Question 1: Yes or no, if confirmed, do you commit to using FAA's enforcement authority against companies that retaliate against individuals who report safety concerns?

Answer:

Contract Tower and Contract Weather Observer Programs. The FAA has two successful government-industry partnerships in the Contract Tower and Contract Weather Observer programs. The contract tower program provides vital air traffic safety services with 265 smaller airports participating in the program, including seven in Washington. These towers support Department of Defense flight training operations and military readiness, general aviation and rural air service operations, and flight schools all across the country. Contract towers account for approximately 30 percent of all tower operations in the nation, and about 70 percent of contract controllers are veterans. The program also continues to get high marks from the DOT Inspector General. Similarly, the contract weather observer program supports weather observers at 135 airports nationwide, providing essential manual observations that supplement the automated weather observation systems.

Question 1: What assurances can you give me and my colleagues that contract towers will be a high priority for you?

Answer:

Question 2: Staffing shortages continue to be a challenge throughout the industry, including contract towers. What measures can FAA and the industry undertake collaboratively to address staffing challenges at these towers?

Answer:

Question 3: Given the numerous runway incursion close calls we have seen in the past few years, including those due to weather conditions, can you elaborate on why it is necessary that the FAA continue to maintain the Contract Weather Observer program to ensure that there is a human visual backup for aircraft safety considering that the Automated Surface/Weather Observing Systems (ASOS/AWOS) have technological limitations?

Answer:

Commercial Space Transportation Regulations. Mr. Bedford, Under the Commercial Space Launch Act of 1984 (51 U.S.C. § 50901), the Secretary of Transportation must oversee the conduct of commercial launch and reentry operations and issue licenses authorizing those operations, as well as facilitate, and promote the U.S. commercial space transportation sector. In

1995, the Secretary delegated this responsibility to the FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation (AST).

In the last several years, the launch industry has been growing increasingly frustrated with perceived delays in processing licenses and approving launches and reentries. These problems will only get worse as the commercial space industry grows.

Last year, the office licensed 156 launches, which is a 33 percent increase from 2023, and a 97 percent increase from 2022. 85 percent of last year's licensed launches were conducted by SpaceX, including 4 Starship launches, which means that SpaceX receives more time and attention from the FAA than any other launch company.

Question 1: Will you commit to ensuring that the Office of Commercial Space Transportation remains sufficiently staffed to be responsive to the needs of the entire commercial space launch industry while also protecting public safety?

Answer:

Question 2: Smaller innovators and new start commercial space companies often struggle to compete against well established players. What role do you see the FAA playing in ensuring the government fosters a diversified ecosystem of space providers to increase resiliency and reduce dependency on any single company?

Answer:

Elon Musk. Mr. Bedford, although it seems Elon Musk will be spending less time in Washington at least in the near term, DOGE's harmful impacts are still being felt throughout the federal government. We need an FAA Administrator who will do what's right for aviation safety—not what Elon Musk's embedded team of DOGE staffers might tell them to do.

Question 1: I understand Mr. Musk contacted you directly when you were under consideration for the FAA Administrator position. Please describe this conversation and specify when it occurred.

Answer:

Question 2: Did Mr. Musk raise DOGE's plans for FAA? If so, please describe what was discussed.

Answer:

Question 3: Did Mr. Musk raise the state of FAA's workforce? If so, please describe what was discussed.

Answer:

Question 4: Did Mr. Musk raise any issue related to FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation? If so, please describe what was discussed.

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Question 7: Did you think it was appropriate for Mr. Musk to contact you like this?

Answer:

Question 8: Did Mr. Musk contact you at any other time after your nomination was announced? If so, please describe any such conversation and specify when it occurred.

Answer:

Credentials. Mr. Bedford, you said "transparency" is one of the top challenges facing the FAA. We absolutely need a leader at the agency who is transparent and does not misrepresent the facts. I am concerned, however, that you have not always been fully candid about your background.

For years, the biography on your company's website represented that you hold "commercial" pilot ratings. It said this as recently as December 2024. But now that you have been nominated to lead FAA, this credential has been scrubbed from your online biography.

Question 1: Mr. Bedford, you do not currently hold commercial pilot ratings, correct?

Answer:

Question 2: You never held commercial pilot ratings, correct?

Answer:

Question 3: But as recently as October 2019, you indicated during remarks at Liberty University that you had commercial pilot ratings, stating: "Between like, 1994-1997, I went through private, instrument, multi-engine, *commercial*, and by the time we got to our next labor negotiation three years later, *I had all my ratings.*" Why did you claim to have commercial pilot ratings at this time?

Answer:

Question 4: In declarations filed with a federal bankruptcy court in 2016 and 2017, respectively, you declared under penalty of perjury: “[I] am a licensed pilot and *certified public accountant*.” However, although you obtained a CPA license in 1986, your license was “null and void” as of 1987. Mr. Bedford, you have not been authorized to practice as a CPA for over 25 years, correct?

Answer:

Question 5: I understand mistakes happen, but we need an FAA Administrator who won’t play fast and loose with the facts. Will you commit to being fully transparent with Congress from the outset, even when the facts are inconvenient?

Answer:

Prior Support for Diversity Initiatives. Mr. Bedford, in your company’s April 2022 petition for an exemption from the 1500-hour rule, you argued that granting your petition would help advance a “renewed industry-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.” And you acknowledged in your petition that promoting access for underrepresented groups, particularly minorities and women, would have “no adverse impact on safety.”

Question 1: Based on your petition, you must agree that we can promote diversity and access to aviation professions for underrepresented groups, including minorities and women, without compromising safety, correct?

Answer:

SENATOR EDWARD MARKEY (D-MA)

Question 1: Will you commit to recuse yourself from working on any matter involving Republic during your full tenure as Administrator?

Question 2: When officials from the FAA appeared before the Senate Commerce Committee last month, they said they had conducted an analysis of the effects of DOGE workforce cuts and delayed resignation offers on aviation safety.

They promised to share that analysis but have not yet done so.

If confirmed, can you commit to sharing that analysis with the Committee?

SENATOR GARY PETERS (D-MI)

1. Mr. Bedford, the FAA Reauthorization Act includes provisions I championed to ensure a quick transition to new non-PFAS firefighting foam and to provide financial resources to airports to help make that transition. To do that, we need to fund the PFAS Replacement Program for Airports.
 - a. If confirmed, will you commit to moving this program?
 - b. Additionally, if confirmed, will you advocate for fully funding this program in accordance with Congressional intent to support airports in their transition away from PFAS foams?
2. I am concerned that the Department's Deferred Resignation Program which has resulted in the loss of hundreds of FAA staff will undermine aviation safety and our ability to recruit and retain air traffic controllers. These losses included aeronautical information specialists, technical staff that help operate air traffic control equipment, and staff that hire and conduct background checks on new air traffic controllers.
 - a. Do you agree that the loss of thousands of FAA support staff could undermine aviation safety and your ability to recruit and retain controllers?
 - b. What is your plan to address that concern?
3. As part of the FAA Reauthorization, I authored a provision – with several Republicans on this committee – that instructed DOT to permanently establish the Women in Aviation Advisory Committee. Women make up less than 10% of licensed pilots and less than 3% of aviation maintenance technicians. Recruiting more women is a necessity if we're going to address these workforce shortages.
 - a. If confirmed, do you commit to supporting the implementation of this provision and taking recommendations from the committee into consideration when crafting workforce related policies at the FAA?
4. The U.S. has had a long history of requiring two-pilots on the flight deck for commercial flight operations.
 - a. If confirmed, are you committed to maintaining this standard?

SENATOR TAMMY DUCKWORTH (D-IL)

Question Topic: FAA Staffing

Question 1: If you are confirmed, will you provide me with a list of the job categories at FAA from which employees have been fired and/or accepted deferred resignation, so far, this year – and how many employees in each job category have left or are scheduled to leave the agency?

Answer:

Question 2: FAA has said it is exempting from staff reductions employees who are performing safety critical functions. Yet the overall mission of FAA is safety. What positions at FAA do you believe are **not** safety critical and, in particular, which positions do you believe are **not** safety critical in the following offices:

a. Air Traffic Organization?

Answer:

b. Aviation Safety?

Answer:

c. Airports?

Answer:

d. Audit and Evaluation?

Answer:

e. Security and Hazardous Materials Safety?

Answer:

f. Office of Commercial Space Transportation?

Answer:

Question 3: FAA has a lot of work ahead of it to implement the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. I don't see how staff reductions will help FAA implement the law in full and on time. Can you guarantee to this committee that FAA will implement FAA Reauthorization in full and on time, regardless of staff reductions at FAA?

Answer:

Question Topic: Grants

Question 1: If confirmed, will you commit to disbursing all grant funding that has been awarded to Illinois in full and without undue delay?

Answer:

Question Topic: Accessibility for Passengers with Disabilities

Question 1: According to data from the Department of Transportation, airlines mishandled 11,527 wheelchairs and scooters in 2023, leading to health and safety concerns for passengers with disabilities. In 2024, the Department finalized a rule, which set new, rigorous standards for assistance for passengers with disabilities – particularly those who use wheelchairs, mandated hands-on training for airline employees and contractors who physically assist passengers with disabilities and handle passengers' wheelchairs and specified actions that airlines must take to protect passengers when a wheelchair is damaged or delayed during transport. Notably, some of these requirements were included in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. In February 2025, Airlines for America and its member companies filed a lawsuit with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, arguing that parts of the final regulation are "unlawful."

- a. If confirmed, will you recommend the Department of Transportation maintain the 2024 wheelchair rule and defend the rule against efforts to overturn some or all of it?

Answer:

Question 2: Congress passed the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (PL 118-63), which requires the FAA to issue regulations and guidance to increase safety and accessibility for passengers with disabilities and an aging population. If confirmed as Administrator:

- A. Do you commit to implementing the FAA Reauthorization Act in full and on time, regardless of any Executive Order that may seek to delay or alter the act's implementation as required by law?

Answer:

- B. Do you commit to placing all of the FAA Reauthorization Act's required regulations and guidance on the Unified Regulatory Agenda?

Answer:

- C. Do you commit to enforcing the regulations required by the FAA Reauthorization Act, including the final wheelchair rule mentioned in Question 1 "Wheelchair Rule" above?

Answer:

Question Topic: Sustainable Aviation Fuel

Question 1: In 2021, multiple U.S. federal agencies, including Department of Transportation and specifically the FAA joined an interagency working group to roll out the SAF Grand Challenge. This was a historic government-wide strategy for scaling up production of SAF that reduces cost and expands the use of SAF across the U.S. airline industry, while also growing the domestic biofuels sector. SAF is a bipartisan topic that Senator Moran and I proudly advocate for as co-chairs of the Senate SAF Caucus. SAF production is critical for the aviation industry. It also creates new economic opportunities in agricultural and rural communities while reducing environmental impacts. It also supports U.S. energy independence and global competitiveness. With the goal of 3 billion gallon per year by the 2030 target, it is important that we remain committed to this goal of American grown, American made biofuels.

- a. Do you remain committed to the expansion of domestic SAF production and usage in this country?

Answer:

Question 2: Without the inclusion of U.S. agricultural feedstock for SAF we will miss an incredible economic and environmental opportunity. That being said, some international aviation sectors have chosen to measure their SAF carbon intensity using the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation or "CORSIA". However, domestically we prefer Illinois' Argonne National Laboratories, Department of Energy commissioned the Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Technologies Model or "GREET Model", as it correctly considers sustainable agricultural practices, reduced land and water uses and other relevant considerations in its calculations.

- a. Do you support the U.S. formally adopting the Argonne GREET model to measure our SAF carbon intensity?

Answer:

- b. Do you support the global aviation sector adopting one single model to measure the carbon intensity of SAF?

Answer:

Question Topic: Federal Elections

Question 1: Who won the 2024 U.S. presidential election?

Answer:

Question 2: Who won the 2020 U.S. presidential election?

Answer:

SENATOR BEN RAY LUJÁN (D-NM)

(1) Republic's Petition from 2022 to the FAA said that if granted would "renewed industry-wide commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion."

(a) Do you still support initiatives to help underrepresented groups overcome barriers to the aviation industry?

(b) Was the DCA collision earlier this year caused by DEI policies?

(2) What specific changes will you implement to update the Air Traffic Control systems and technologies, while maintaining or improving safety and reliability?

(3) Under the FAA Reauthorization, the FAA was directed to collaborate with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) on a 12-month-long study focused on unsafe cabin temperatures and conditions. The FAA has recently given an update that they "will finalize an agreement and funding for the project after defining the scope." Will you commit to providing an update about when Congress can expect the findings of this study and what else is the FAA doing to address unsafe cabin temperatures?

(4) How will you collaborate with scientists or research organizations to improve safety, standards, and energy efficiency within the airline industry?

(5) The increase in extreme weather events is causing more delays, cancellations, and hazards for flights. How do you plan to ensure the airline industry is adaptive and resilient to these changes without sacrificing safety?

(6) Did Joe Biden lawfully win the 2020 presidential election?

(7) Did Donald Trump lawfully win the 2024 presidential election?

SENATOR JOHN HICKENLOOPER (D-CO)

Air Traffic Control Outages

Communications outages that impact Air Traffic Control (ATC) operations have continued to increase in their frequency and severity. Recently, the Denver Air Route Traffic Control Center recently had a communications outage that impacted primary and backup communications channels used by ATC personnel. Despite redundant systems for safety, any ATC outage for any duration is unacceptable to the American public.

Question 1: Mr. Bedford, do you believe the FAA accurately records and discloses to the public how often these occur? How could the FAA increase transparency around the impact of ATC communications outages?

Single Pilot Operations

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), of which the U.S. is a founding member, has been investigating “Extended Minimum Crew Operations.” If this rulemaking were advanced, it could allow for one human pilot alongside an autonomous system to operate on the flight deck for a commercial flight.

Question 2: Mr. Bedford, what safety considerations would you direct the FAA to consider and prioritize if this proposal were to advance at the international level? What concerns does this raise for you?

Supersonic Aviation

President Trump issued an Executive Order directing the FAA to (1) repeal the prohibition on overland supersonic flight and (2) establish a noise-based certification standard. While supersonic aviation has the ability to transform our economy and increase access to long-distance destinations, it is of the utmost importance that supersonic aviation is safely integrated into our National Air Space. The FAA plays a key role in entrusting that safe integration takes place while also mitigating noise disturbances.

Question 3: Mr. Bedford, if confirmed, how would you consider noise, airspace integration, and airport infrastructure concerns during this rulemaking?

Artificial Intelligence Integration for ATC Modernization

Artificial intelligence and machine learning are already in use for low-risk use cases by airlines. When applied safely and intentionally, AI has the ability to help improve efficiency and lower costs.

Question 4: Mr. Bedford, as the FAA continues its work towards modernizing the air traffic control system, how would you guide the agency towards integrating AI and machine-based learning to enhance efficiency and safety?

PFAS and Firefighting Foam

For decades, commercial service airports have used fluorinated firefighting foams containing PFAS. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 authorized a new grant program to support airports in transitioning to fluorine-free alternatives.

*Question 5: **Mr. Bedford**, as airports begin to make this transition, what guidance and assistance do you anticipate that the FAA will provide? How will you support airports in this endeavor?*

Grant Requirements

I appreciate your commitment to taking action to improve aviation safety. However, I am concerned that the Department of Transportation and FAA's attempt to impose new mandates that are unrelated to aviation safety in order for airports to receive federal funds will undermine safety.

In September 2023, Denver International Airport (DEN) in Colorado, the nation's third busiest airport, completed Taxiway EE. This safety project, completed with FAA funds, eliminated an identified hot spot and improved airfield efficiency. But if airports like DEN are denied FAA grants for reasons unrelated to aviation, it risks harming the safety of the entire national airspace system.

*Question 6: **Mr. Bedford**, if confirmed, do you pledge to continue to fund critical safety and modernization infrastructure projects without conditioning them on irrelevant requirements?*

Advisory Group Engagement

Following a mid-air collision at Centennial Airport in Colorado in 2021, corrective actions led to a new traffic pattern. This resulted in increased low-flying traffic over local communities and, subsequently, increased noise levels.

The FAA, Centennial Airport, flight schools, and the local community came together to form the Centennial Airport Community Noise Roundtable Study Group Committee. This innovative engagement has been seen as a template for such noise-related aviation concerns across the country. However, earlier this year, FAA involvement in this process was suddenly halted due to an agency-wide prohibition on engagement with such outside groups, regardless of their effectiveness or purpose.

*Question 7: **Mr. Bedford**, if confirmed, will you direct the FAA to continue this important work with community-led organizations so that these aircraft noise mitigation efforts could be replicated elsewhere in Colorado and potentially across the country?*