

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 PAGERANKING 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?

Response: If confirmed, my highest priority will be maintaining and enhancing the safety of the U.S. aviation system. I recognize the importance of the Aviation Safety Act of 2010 and the significant reduction in commercial aviation fatalities since its implementation. Any decisions involving pilot certification standards, including flight hour requirements, will be based on data, improved safety outcomes, and a transparent rulemaking process. I will not authorize any changes that would compromise safety, and I will ensure that any evaluation of alternative pathways adheres strictly to statutory authority and established FAA procedures.

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.

Response: If confirmed, I will fully comply with all applicable ethics rules and guidance, including any required recusals related to my previous role at Republic Airways. I understand the importance of avoiding any perception of conflicts of interest and will act accordingly. I will ensure that any decisions regarding Republic—or any other former affiliation—are handled in accordance with all federal ethics obligations to maintain public trust and uphold the FAA’s integrity.

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?

Response: Without access to the full scope of FAA's internal assessments and data, I'm not in a position to offer an informed judgment on the timing of any specific spectrum auction. That said, I understand the concerns raised by the proximity of this band to frequencies used by critical aviation systems. If confirmed, I would prioritize reviewing the technical analysis and engaging proactively with relevant agencies to ensure our public aviation safety concerns are fully addressed in any relevant decision.

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

Response: I am aware that the events of 2021 highlighted significant gaps in coordination and planning. However, without full access to the technical evaluations currently underway, I would not want to speculate on future outcomes. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the FAA remains actively engaged in cross-agency planning and mitigation efforts to prevent any recurrence of operational disruptions experienced in 2021.

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?

Response: My intention in both settings has been to emphasize that aviation safety must be fully evaluated before any final decisions are made. If confirmed, I would carefully review the agency's analysis and ensure that safety concerns continue to be voiced clearly, objectively, and proactively in any interagency process.

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?

Response: Transparency and consistency are essential to public trust in the FAA's work. If confirmed, I would be committed to ensuring that the positions I take—whether in public or private—are guided by the same principles: safety, data, and the public interest.

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?

Response: Replacing altimeters involves developing performance standards, FAA certification, OEM manufacturing, and fleet-wide installation. The technical steps will depend on a number of variables, and I would rely heavily on FAA's subject matter experts and industry collaboration to navigate this complex process if confirmed.

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?

Response: Cost estimates vary and depend on factors such as aircraft type and installation

logistics. Without FAA's and the industry's detailed analysis, I cannot provide precise figures but I would support transparent, data-driven cost assessments moving forward.

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?

Response: Timelines will depend on many factors, including when standards are finalized, the availability of certified equipment, and operator readiness. Without access to current FAA implementation planning, I cannot give a precise estimate. If confirmed, I would make it a priority to understand the scope of the challenge and support a well-coordinated, safety-first transition.

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?

Response: Ensuring consistent ADS-B Out operation in congested airspace is critical for safety. Further, I support evaluating and enforcing policies that promote effective use of ADS-B Out by all operators, including previously exempted Federal agencies.*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?

Response: Strengthening FAA oversight to address gaps in ADS-B Out compliance aligns with maintaining safe, shared airspace. I look forward to reviewing the bill's provisions and working collaboratively to enhance safety.

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?

Response: ADS-B In has the potential to improve pilot situational awareness in complex environments, especially on the ground to avoid runway conflicts. I recognize the NTSB's recommendations and would support careful evaluation of benefits and implementation challenges.

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?

Response: If confirmed, I would welcome working with you and the Committee to explore opportunities to enhance situational awareness through ADS-B In, consistent with FAA safety and operational priorities.

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?
Response: FAA's Safety Management System plays a vital role in identifying and mitigating risks. Recent incidents suggest there is reason to believe that further review and improvement to the ATO SMS are warranted.

Question 2: Do you think FAA's Aviation Safety Office's SMS is working? Why or why not?
Response: Similar to the ATO, the Aviation Safety Office's SMS is a critical layer of safety oversight in our consolidated Agency SMS design. However, given recent events, it's important to assess whether existing processes are fully effective.

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?

Response: Cross department coordination, within the FAA, is essential for proactive and effective safety oversight. Based on the limited access I was given to senior FAA leaders prior to accepting President Trump's nomination, I believe lines of communication and collaborative efforts must improve to ensure optimal information sharing and proactive response.

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?

Response: I am open to exploring ways to enhance safety management, including considering expert input to promote integration across FAA offices.

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?

Response: The concentration of arrivals in a short timeframe can present challenges that merit careful evaluation for safety impacts.

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

Response: Managing high volumes in compressed periods likely increases workload, which should be assessed to support controller effectiveness.

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

Response: I understand the concerns raised, and I believe this issue may merit further review. However, I would need access to the full set of operational and safety data before determining whether a formal safety review is necessary. Understanding the accident that took place on January 29, 2025, I am sure a number of reviews are underway by both the FAA and the NTSB. Therefore, I would like to assess these reviews and their findings to determine what other reviews may be necessary.

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?

Response: The 737 MAX tragedies underscore the need for independent, data-driven oversight and clear accountability. If confirmed, I would approach the role with a strong commitment to safety, transparency, and public trust, ensuring the FAA acts decisively on credible safety concerns.

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?

Response: If confirmed, my comprehensive ethics agreement ensures my complete separation from the aviation industry, which includes on-going recusals. I will work tirelessly to enhance regulatory compliance and enforcement for rule breakers. My North Star will be improving public safety and oversight for operators and manufacturers.

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?

Response: I believe the findings point to gaps in workforce capacity, consistency in oversight, and transparency in delegation processes. If confirmed, I would evaluate the FAA's current response to the OIG's recommendations and work with internal teams to ensure strong oversight mechanisms are in place. Enforcement actions may also be proper to effect necessary improvements.

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?

Response: I support active engagement with manufacturers on safety and quality issues. If confirmed, I would evaluate the most effective oversight structure, including the role of in-person meetings, based on safety priorities and staff recommendations.

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?

Response: I would prioritize the creation of an implementation tracking document and oversight process to ensure appropriate internal accountability, and support building capacity to institutionalize improvements over time.

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?

Response: I wholeheartedly support advancing U.S. aerospace leadership and innovation. If confirmed, I look forward to learning more about the Spokane Tech Hub and similar efforts happening across the country, to strengthen our domestic aerospace capabilities while supporting the highest safety standards.

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?

Response: Safety is the foremost priority in any operational model. While industry innovation is ongoing, I believe such changes must be thoroughly evaluated, supported by robust safety data and public acceptance. I have not made any policy conclusions on this issue.

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

Response: Any change to flight deck staffing must be carefully scrutinized. Ensuring redundancy and pilot readiness are fundamental to safe operations, and I would approach any proposal in this area with caution.

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?

Response: Automation can enhance safety, but it is not a substitute for human judgment. A balanced, well-integrated approach is key. We must ensure our active commercial pilots are maintaining their hand-flying skills and are not over relying on flight deck automation.

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

Response: First, I would say I am not aware of anything even remotely close to this sort of technology coming to market over the next 5-10 years. That said, the FAA would need to evaluate the data, operational risks, cyber risks, public perception, and stakeholder input before taking a formal position. My priority will always be ensuring that any decision aligns with FAA’s safety mission.

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?

Response: I would not say that prior Administrators failed, but priorities changed. We have a unique alignment to finally achieve the modernization goals of the past two decades. In that effort, I bring to the table a proven record of operational, executive, and industry leadership experience unlike that of any Administrator in the last quarter century. If confirmed, I would focus on establishing clear, measurable goals and objectives for the Agency and its management team. I would develop a clear strategy of execution, accountability, and empowering the FAA’s workforce to meet modernization goals. Finally, I would transparently communicate and collaborate with Congressional oversight to ensure necessary oversight is accomplished in a bipartisan manner for the benefit of the Agency and the traveling public.

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

Response: My views are based on years of direct experience interacting with the FAA as a

regulated entity and industry stakeholder. If confirmed, I intend to engage with former Administrators to benefit from their insights.

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?

Response: Secretary Duffy is leading an effort to build a brand new, state of the art air traffic control system, to address the aging infrastructure and workforce shortages. If confirmed, I would need to fully review those plans, the current status of planning, and any resource or implementation gaps before determining what additional steps may be necessary. Addressing these infrastructure and workforce issues effectively will be critical to supporting safety, reliability, and system capacity.

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

Response: I would need to review the specific cost-benefit and operational analyses for each case. Decisions should be guided by safety, service levels, and resource optimization.

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?

Response: I recognize the staffing challenges and would support FAA efforts to improve recruitment pipelines, compensation structures, and career development to attract and retain the best, brightest, and most qualified individuals for the job.

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?

Response: My role would be to provide fact-based assessments of operational impacts. If confirmed, I would advocate for the resources needed to meet FAA's safety and certification responsibilities.

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?

Response: I take whistleblower protections seriously and support using all available authority to ensure individuals can report concerns without fear of retaliation. I would consult with FAA's legal and enforcement teams to ensure proper application of the law.

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 InspectorGeneral. 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?

Response: I value the role contract towers play in the national airspace system, especially for smaller and rural airports, as well as pilot development and training. If confirmed, I would work to ensure they receive proper support and attention.

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?

Response: Addressing staffing shortages will require collaboration with training institutions, industry partners, and veterans' organizations. If confirmed, I would work to strengthen recruitment pipelines and improve retention strategies.

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?

Response: While automated systems have improved, human observers provide critical judgment in dynamic conditions. If confirmed, I would evaluate the program's current performance and safety contributions as part of broader operational planning.

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?

Response: I recognize the importance of the commercial space sector and the FAA's dual role in enabling innovation and ensuring safety. If confirmed, I would assess whether current resources are sufficient to meet growing demands and work to ensure proper staffing such that Agency can timely respond to increasing demands.

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?

Response: FAA should maintain a level playing field by applying its safety and licensing criteria consistently. It is in the national interest to support a broad and competitive commercial space industry.

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.

Response: On February 25, 2025, I had a brief conversation with Mr. Musk. The conversation involved us getting to know one another on a personal level. He asked me what I thought were some of the FAA's most significant challenges. I told him obsolete equipment, aged infrastructure, and workforce shortages would be at the top of my list of concerns. He agreed; and that was it. I have not had any further contact with him since that one phone call.

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

Response: No, he did not.

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

Response: No, he did not.

Question 4: Did Mr. Musk raise any issue related to FAA's Office of Commercial Space Transportation? If so, please describe what was discussed.**Response:** No, he did not.

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

Response: Yes, he mentioned that he believed a big problem for the Agency was the lack of software tools and internal development capabilities, which I agreed could be an area of opportunity for rapid improvement. This would be most immediately applicable to SMS data

assessment.

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

Response: Yes, he believed the Agency should have a technologist as the next Administrator. I countered that the Agency could hire or contract for competent technology help. The next Administrator, I believed, needed to be a proven, experienced executive with strong strategic and leadership skills and ideally would have a deep understanding of SMS.

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

Response: I had no issue with Mr. Musk contacting me.

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.

Response: No, he has not.

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?

Response: It is true I fully completed all my commercial flight training, including the FAA written exam and FAA oral exam. However, due to weather, I was unable to complete my FAA check ride before switching jobs, and therefore did not formally obtain my commercial flight license.

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

Response: Correct.*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?

Response: Context is important in this setting. I was simply trying to relate to these students' my appreciation for their achievements based on my own extensive flight training experience. I still fly, as a pilot, on a regular basis.

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?

Response: Our bankruptcy filings were prepared by highly competent lawyers who were aware of my background and the fact that I was not holding myself out as a current, practicing CPA on behalf of Republic Airways, or anyone else. I have not practiced professionally as a CPA since 1987.

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?

Response: Yes. Transparency and accountability are essential for public service.

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?

Response: Promoting greater access to the transformational careers in the aviation profession, for all individuals, regardless of their financial means, is of immense importance to me personally. However, I would never allow someone who is not competent to operate an aircraft or provide access to the flight deck just because they checked a particular box. I commend President Trump and Secretary Duffy for their air traffic controller workforce initiative which will allow the best people the opportunity to train to become a licensed Air Traffic Controller, regardless of their financial status.

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?

Response: If confirmed, I will fully comply with all applicable ethics laws and obligations, including recusal requirements. I will consult with FAA ethics officials to ensure that any necessary recusals are handled appropriately.

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?

Response: If confirmed, I would review the analysis in question to better understand any legal, procedural, or security considerations that may apply. Subject to those factors, I am committed to ensuring appropriate transparency 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?

Response: I recognize the importance of helping airports transition away from PFAS-based firefighting foams, and if confirmed, I will review the current status of the program and work to ensure it moves forward consistent with Congressional direction.

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?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Department and stakeholders to assess funding needs and ensure alignment with Congressional intent, subject to the overall budget process and priorities.

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?

Response: The FAA's workforce is critical to the agency's mission. It is my understanding that safety-critical positions were not eligible to participate in the program. If confirmed, I would work to ensure the FAA has proper staffing levels to carry out its core mission of safety.

b. What is your plan to address that concern?

Response: If confirmed, I intend to review staffing shortfalls across the agency. Ensuring FAA has the workforce it needs to safely operate, fulfill its public safety mission, engage in the comprehensive modernization of the ATC system and grow our National Airspace System would be a top priority.

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?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Department to understand the current status of this provision and how it is being implemented. I value efforts to strengthen and diversify the aviation workforce with the best skilled individuals we can attract. I would carefully review the Committee's recommendations as part of that broader effort.

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?

Response: Based on current safety practices and operational realities, maintaining two pilots on the flight deck remains the global standard. I support that position, and any discussion of change would require a rigorous safety-based review involving all stakeholders. **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?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Department to gather the requested information

regarding staffing changes at the FAA. I understand the importance of this data for oversight, and will need to ensure that I consider any applicable privacy and personnel regulations before making that commitment.

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:

Answer:

e. f. Security and Hazardous Materials Safety?

Office of Commercial Space Transportation?

Answer: **Response:** I am not presently inside the Agency. However, based on my review of publicly

available information, it is my understanding the FAA employs tens of thousands of people with hundreds, if not thousands, of unique job positions. If confirmed, I intend to review staffing levels across the agency, including any potential impacts of deferred resignations. Ensuring FAA has the workforce it needs to safely operate, fulfill its public safety mission, engage in the comprehensive modernization of the ATC system and grow our National Airspace System would be a top priority.

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?

Response: Implementing the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 is a priority. If confirmed, I will work with the Department to assess staffing needs and ensure that the agency has the resources necessary to meet its obligations. I am committed to making every effort to fulfill the law's requirements in a timely and effective manner.

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?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Department to ensure that grant funding awarded to Illinois is disbursed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and program requirements. Timely and efficient distribution of funds is important, and I am committed to facilitating this process within the framework established by the Department.

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? **Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Department to review the 2024 wheelchair rule. I am committed to ensuring that the safety and dignity of passengers with disabilities are upheld, and I will support the Department in its efforts to address these issues in accordance with the law.**

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?

Response: If confirmed, I will work with the Department to implement the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 in accordance with its provisions and timelines, subject to any legal considerations or directives that may arise.

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

Response: I understand there is a process to placing regulations and guidance on the Unified Regulatory Agenda. I will ensure that the required regulations and guidance are placed on the Unified Regulatory Agenda, as appropriate, in line with the Department's regulatory processes.

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?

Response: I am committed to enforcing all regulations that fall within the purview of the FAA.

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?**Response:** I recognize that sustainable aviation fuel has played an important role in supporting

the aviation industry's long-term goals. If confirmed, I would look forward to working with the Department and other agencies to better understand the status of SAF initiatives and how FAA can continue to support the broader policy objectives involved.

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?

Response: I'm aware that the GREET model has been widely supported by many stakeholders due to its ability to account for U.S.-based agricultural practices and energy inputs. If confirmed, I would review how the model aligns with existing policy frameworks and consult with the appropriate experts and agencies before offering a position on its formal adoption.

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

Response: Consistency in how carbon intensity is measured across the aviation sector is clearly merited, particularly for fostering international cooperation and market clarity. That said, different models may reflect different regional priorities. If confirmed, I would want to better understand the implications of model harmonization before taking a position.

Question Topic: Federal Elections

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

Response: Donald Trump was the certified winner of the 2024 presidential election.

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

Response: Joe Biden was the certified winner of the 2020 presidential election.**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?

Response: I believe looking for ways to hire the best, brightest, and most qualified candidates from all communities benefits the aviation industry and strengthens the workforce. Merit should drive access, not financial means.

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

Response: My understanding is that the DCA collision is currently being investigated by the

FAA and NTSB. I do not want to jump to conclusions as to any findings on the matter.

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

Response: Under President Trump and Secretary Duffy's leadership, there's already an ongoing effort within the FAA to develop a modernization plan for the air traffic control system. If confirmed, I would review the current modernization plan in detail, understand where progress stands, and identify where additional leadership or coordination could help ensure improvements continue without compromising safety.

(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?

Response: If confirmed, I would work with FAA staff to understand the current status of the study with NASEM and provide appropriate updates to Congress. I would also need to learn more about what additional actions may already be underway or may be needed to address cabin temperature issues effectively.

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

Response: The FAA has a strong history of partnering with research institutions and technical experts. If confirmed, I would support maintaining those partnerships, where appropriate, and would seek to understand where further collaboration could help address any emerging safety and energy-efficiency challenges. I do believe that the greatest opportunity to reduce aviation fuel consumption and thereby carbon emissions will be derived from ATC modernization which can significantly reduce current ground hold times and air holding times by aircraft enroute.

(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?

Response: Weather has always been a challenge for aviation. If confirmed, I would need to better understand the FAA's current work on weather forecasting, traffic management, operational planning, facility risk, and resilience to evaluate where improvements can be made to maintain both safety and system resilience.

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

Response: Joe Biden was the certified winner of the 2020 presidential election.

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

Response: Donald Trump was the certified winner of 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?

Response: ATC outages are serious events that merit full transparency and public trust. If confirmed, I would assess how these events are currently tracked and reported and explore whether additional steps could be taken to ensure clear, accurate information and timely communication to the public about their impact, without unnecessarily undermining the public's confidence in the safety of air travel.

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?

Response: Any changes to flight crew standards would need to undergo thorough and rigorous safety evaluation. If confirmed, I would expect FAA to take a cautious and evidence-based approach, examining issues like pilot incapacitation, system redundancy, cybersecurity, and public confidence before taking any position. I would also want to understand the full scope of ICAO's proposal and its implications for domestic operations.

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?

Response: If confirmed, I would need to understand the FAA's current work on these issues and how they are balancing all safety considerations with innovation. I would look to ensure that all factors are appropriately weighed in any rulemaking process.

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?

Response: AI has promising applications in aviation, but safety must come first. If confirmed, I would need to better understand what safeguards, especially cyber risk protections, privacy and

data risk security, oversight, and testing are in place today, and how FAA is evaluating new technologies. Ensuring that AI tools augment, rather than replace, human oversight will be an important focus.

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?

Response: I understand this transition is both important and complex. If confirmed, I would need a clear picture of the current status of FAA's guidance and support and work with stakeholders to make sure airports are receiving the resources and clarity they need to implement mitigation alternatives safely and effectively.

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?

Response: Safety and modernization are essential to the FAA's mission. If confirmed, I would need to understand the current grant criteria and how decisions are made to ensure they align with the agency's core safety responsibilities. I understand the importance of keeping those priorities focused and consistent.

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?

Response: Community engagement plays a meaningful role in local aviation issues. If

confirmed, I would review the current FAA policy on outside group engagement to better understand the rationale for recent changes, as well as explore options to support effective,