



With Shutdown Looming, PASS President Warns Against Gambling With Aviation Safety

As Congress continues to debate government funding, history may repeat itself in the form of another government shutdown, and the president of the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, AFL-CIO (PASS)—representative of 11,000 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) employees—is providing information on the impact of a shutdown on aviation safety and other concerns during a hearing today before the House Aviation Subcommittee. The government continues to heal from the partial government shutdown in January—the longest in history—and PASS National President Mike Perrone is warning that another shutdown would be a gamble with aviation safety that the country should not be willing to take.

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“Aviation plays a critical role in today’s economy and delivers invaluable services to the flying public and the military,” said Perrone. “The FAA is simply not operating at full potential during a shutdown. The flying public should not be subjected to unnecessary risk due to political disagreements. The situation must not be repeated.”

During the last government shutdown, FAA technicians were working without pay and aviation safety inspectors were furloughed. This resulted in essential staff fearing when and if they would get paid and, due to inspectors being off the job, important safety work not being done. “Aviation safety must be the number one priority of the FAA no matter the state of Congress,” emphasized Perrone.

During the hearing, Perrone shared additional concerns with members of Congress, including the rapidly expanding delegation of work traditionally assigned to aviation safety inspectors. With families of victims of the Boeing 737 MAX tragedies also present, Perrone expressed his condolences while emphasizing the inherent risk associated with allowing the industry to oversee itself. Despite the ongoing investigations into the causes of the 737 MAX crashes, the FAA is continuing to expand the Organization Designation Authorization (ODA) program, which delegates safety oversight to industry without adequate regulatory oversight. “While we await the results of the ongoing investigations surrounding the 737 MAX, the FAA continues to move toward increased delegation and further removing FAA inspectors from the certification process,” he said.

Perrone also addressed the lack of adequate training and staffing as it relates to the ever-expanding Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS, or drones) industry. “It is of crucial importance the FAA not let the mounting pressure from industry to rapidly integrate UAS into the NAS [National Airspace System] move forward without stringent safeguards in place,” he told the committee. In addition, he questioned FAA oversight of work on U.S. aircraft performed by foreign repair stations, which are not held to the same standards as domestic repair stations. For instance, as opposed to U.S. facilities, foreign repair stations are warned of inspections and given ample opportunity to correct or conceal violations prior to the arrival of the FAA inspector.



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By representing the FAA employee perspective on the panel, Perrone drew attention to the vital role a highly-skilled workforce—one that is allowed to do its job with adequate training and regulatory oversight—plays in keeping the aviation system safe for the flying public. “PASS emphasizes that the safety of our airspace starts and ends with investments in the employees who oversee and maintain it. Anything short of that is simply gambling with aviation safety,” he concluded.

[Read the full testimony](#)

[PASS letter to FAA requesting halt to expanding ODA program](#)

[Joint union letter to DOT Secretary Chao re: foreign repair stations](#)