

March 9, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
House Appropriations Committee  
2306 RHOB  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen:

As the Committee works on the Department of Transportation/Federal Aviation Administration FY 2018 appropriations bill, the organizations listed on the next page urge your support for the following bill language under the FAA “Operations” section that would provide dedicated funding for the Contract Tower Program:

*Provided further, That of the funds appropriated under this heading, not less than \$159,000,000 shall be for the fully funded and cost-share towers in the contract tower program.*

Events of the past several years have made it abundantly clear that the FAA Contract Tower Program enjoys strong bipartisan support in both chambers of Congress. We urge you to dedicate full funding to the program for FY 2018 and extend the bill language that is currently in the FY 2017 spending bill. This funding level will maintain operations of all current contract towers and applicable new facilities that FAA expects to add to the program by the end of FY 2018.

The FAA Contract Tower Program has provided cost-effective and essential air traffic safety services for over three decades. Currently, 253 smaller airports in 46 states participate in the program, including one in New Jersey. Together these 253 towers handle approximately 28 percent of all air traffic control tower (ATCT) aircraft operations in the U.S. but only account for about 14 percent of FAA’s overall budget allotted to ATCT tower operations. More importantly, the safety and efficiency record of the FAA Contract Tower Program has been validated numerous times by the DOT Inspector General, as well as by FAA safety audits.

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

As a result of this 35-year government/industry partnership, the FAA Contract Tower Program: (1) enhances aviation safety at airports that otherwise would not have a tower; (2) provides annual cost savings to FAA and taxpayers of approximately \$200 million; (3) helps airports with retaining and developing commercial air service and general aviation; (4) provides significant support for military readiness/training and national security operations (47 percent of all military operations at civilian airports in the U.S. occur at FAA contract towers), (5) promotes economic development and creates jobs in local communities; (6) connects smaller airports and rural communities with the national air transportation system, and (7) consistently receives high marks for customer service from aviation users and pilots. The bottom line is that, absent this highly successful partnership, many local communities and smaller airports would not receive the significant safety benefits of ATC services.

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

Sincerely,

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

Mark Baker  
President and CEO  
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association

Martin H. Hiller  
President  
National Air Transportation Association

Mark S. Kimberling  
President  
National Association of State Aviation Officials

Stephen A. Alterman  
President  
Cargo Airline Association

Faye Malarkey Black  
President  
Regional Airline Association

Ed Bolen  
President & CEO  
National Business Aviation Association

Kevin M. Burke  
President & CEO  
Airports Council International - NA

Peter F. Dumont  
President  
Air Traffic Control Association