



January 8, 2019

The Honorable Donald Trump
President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear President Trump, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McConnell:

On behalf of Airports Council International—North America (ACI-NA) – the trade association representing local, regional, and state governing bodies that own and operate commercial airports throughout the United States – I am writing to implore you to resolve the current federal government shutdown as quickly as possible due to the negative impacts the impasse is having on critical safety and security programs and airport operations. Federal staffing and other resource shortfalls brought on by this shutdown threaten existing and new air service to communities across the country, harming air travelers, businesses, and regional economies all over America. A true national crisis would develop if we cripple the U.S. aviation system in this manner.

Due to the shutdown, the programs, protocols, and personnel at the federal agencies directly responsible for supporting the U.S. aviation industry – namely the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) – are all limited to essential operations. As this shutdown drags on, ACI-NA and our members are increasingly concerned about the ability of these key federal agencies to continue providing the safety and security services that are so critical at U.S. airports, as well as at international airports with CBP preclearance facilities. The significant reduction in federal operations under the shutdown is already causing numerous problems at our nation's airports, such as longer wait times at TSA checkpoints and CBP air ports-of-entry, suspended reviews of airport infrastructure improvement projects that could delay them beyond the spring/summer construction season, and canceled Global Entry interviews for hundreds of prospective enrollees. This list of impacts will only grow longer as the shutdown continues.

The shutdown has worsened the existing challenges at some airports with lengthy TSA checkpoint wait times due to the combined effects of insufficient TSA staffing, growing passenger traffic, and increased scrutiny of passengers and their carry-on baggage. TSA staffing shortages brought on by this shutdown are likely to further increase checkpoint wait times and may even lead to the complete closure of some checkpoints. In addition to staffing-related issues, airports are extremely concerned about the security vulnerability associated with large groups of passengers waiting in public areas at TSA passenger screening checkpoints, as well as a significant increase in the number of passengers and bags missing their intended flights. In the long-term, the TSA will

suffer as a result of the inability to recruit and retain employees, further exacerbating the agency's existing staffing challenges.

CBP faces similar staffing challenges, as both passengers and cargo are likely to face increased processing times during the shutdown due to staffing shortages at air ports-of-entry. Current insufficient CBP staffing of 3,600 officers system-wide results in long passenger wait times and missed flight connections, thereby discouraging international travelers, who spend an average of \$4,000 per visit, from traveling to the United States. A prolonged federal shutdown will only worsen these staffing challenges and further suppress travel demand to the United States, inflicting additional harm on the national economy. Due to the shutdown, CBP has now suspended enrollment interviews for its Global Entry program – a key trusted traveler program that enhances aviation security – and delayed the issuance of customs seals to airport and airline employees needing to work in CBP-controlled areas of airports. As the shutdown drags on, CBP, like TSA, faces the prospect of being an unattractive place to work.

The effects of the shutdown at the FAA are also concerning. FAA's non-exempt employees involved with regulatory compliance, licensing, and certification; research and development; preventive maintenance; new system/capability deployment; and safety oversight are no longer on the job, and their mission-critical work is expected to be interrupted for the duration of the shutdown. As a result, no one will be there to develop and approve enhanced flight procedures, install and maintain navigational aids and air traffic control support systems, coordinate the review of applications for new or expanded airport facilities, or hire and train new air traffic controllers. Furthermore, FAA's exempt employees must focus on day-to-day operations, eliminating their ability to participate in important activities like coordinating with airport staff on upcoming construction projects or supporting community outreach. All of this will result in unnecessary cost increases and delays in completing critical airport-improvement projects nationwide. Airport-infrastructure needs – which ACI-NA estimates to total more than \$20 billion per year – are already underfunded due to stagnant federal investment in the Airport Improvement Program and a Passenger Facility Charge user fee that has not been increased in nearly 20 years.

Finally, as has been noted by both the National Air Traffic Controllers Association and the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, the shutdown exacerbates already dire staffing issues within the air traffic control workforce. A protracted shutdown creates perverse incentives for highly trained air traffic controllers to retire and deters new controllers from entering the workforce. These developments have the potential to cause long-lasting damage to the U.S. economy.

As this shutdown drags on into its third week, ACI-NA strongly urges you to fully reopen the federal government, and we stand ready to work with you to restore the U.S. aviation system to its full operating capacity so it can effectively meet our country's growing passenger and cargo needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin M. Burke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and last name "Burke" clearly legible.

Kevin M. Burke
President and CEO
Airports Council International—North America