

February 19, 2020

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
House Appropriations Committee
2365 RHOB
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairwoman Lowey:

As the Committee works on the Department of Transportation/Federal Aviation Administration FY '21 appropriations bill, the organizations listed on the next page urge your support for the following bill language under the FAA "Operations" account that will provide dedicated funding for the Contract Tower Program:

Provided further, That of the funds appropriated under this heading, not less than \$172,800,000 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 '21 and extend the bill language that was adopted in previous spending bills. The \$172.8 million funding level for FY '21 will fund all 256 contract towers currently in the program, including five in New York, and provide full-year funding for several new airports expected to be added to the program in FY '21.

The FAA Contract Tower Program has provided cost-effective and essential air traffic safety services for over three decades. Currently, 256 smaller airports in 46 states participate in the program. Together these 256 towers handle approximately 29 percent of all air traffic control tower (ATCT) aircraft operations in the U.S. but only account for about 10 percent of FAA's overall budget allotted to ATCT tower operations and save FAA and taxpayers approximately \$200 million per year. 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 and meet FAA training and operating standards. 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 38-year highly successful government/industry partnership, the FCT Program: (1) enhances aviation safety at airports that otherwise would not have a tower; (2) provides significant cost savings to FAA and taxpayers; (3) plays a key role in connecting airports and communities with the national air transportation system; (4) supports disaster relief, law enforcement, and emergency medical operations; (5) promotes economic development and creates jobs locally; (6) 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 and 70 percent of contract controllers are veterans), and (7) consistently receives high marks for customer service from aviation users (pilots, airlines, FBOs, flight schools and corporate flight departments). The bottom line is that, absent this highly successful government/industry 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



Faye Malarkey Black
President
Regional Airline Association



Mark Baker
President and CEO
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association



Ed Bolen
President & CEO
National Business Aviation Association



Timothy R. Obitts
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National Air Transportation Association



Kevin M. Burke
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Airports Council International - NA



John R. Binder III
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Peter F. Dumont
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Stephen A. Alterman
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