Air Traffic Control Workforce Development Act of 2025
Senator John Hoeven (R-ND), Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH) & Senator Jerry Moran (R-KS)

On January 29th, 2025, Reagan National Airport (DCA) saw the deadliest commercial aviation incident on U.S. soil in more than 23 years. Although this incident was horrifying, it was unfortunately not unimaginable. In recent years, near-misses at airports across the country have increased, many of which were very narrowly avoided due in no small part to the heroic actions of the certified professional controllers (CPCs) staffing the air traffic control towers. Managing overcrowding, delays, and close calls is nothing new for air traffic controllers around the country, many of whom are overworked and understaffed.

Today, there are approximately 2,371 fewer CPCs than the FAA's hiring target, and 3,544 CPC below the Collaborative Resource Workgroup (CRWG) CPC target. This shortage of CPCs has long created inefficiencies in our aviation system, straining the frontline controller workforce and reducing the safety of our airspace. The ongoing ATC workforce shortage has caused the FAA to implement mandatory overtime for many air traffic controllers, many of whom work 60-hour workweeks, increasing stress and causing fatigue within a profession that is integral to the safety of our skies.

FAA Enhanced- Collegiate Training Initiative Program Improvements

- **Enhanced-Collegiate Training Initiative Authorization**
  - o Codifies the FAA's Enhanced – CTI Program, which allows qualified institutions of higher education to provide students with equivalent FAA Academy air traffic control training. Graduates of the Enhanced-CTI program, with FAA oversight, will be placed directly into a facility if hired as Air Traffic Control Specialist.
  - o Establishes a new grant program, authorized at $20 million per year, for Enhanced-CTI schools to support investments in curriculum, high-fidelity simulators, the hiring of qualified faculty, and other classroom supplies.

- **Enhanced-Collegiate Training Initiative Faculty Annuity Supplement Penalty Waiver**
  - o Removes the disincentive for retired FAA air traffic controllers to work as air traffic instructors at Enhanced-CTI programs, by providing a waiver to the annuity supplemental penalty.
  - o Under current law, FAA air traffic controllers must retire by age 56. As this is earlier than the normal retirement age, controllers are included as a "special group" under the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS) and contribute an additional 0.5 percent of their annual salary into a special retirement annuity account. In return, they receive a FERS annuity payment during the mandatory retirement period between 56 and the Social Security minimum age of 62.
  - o The retired controller's special annuity payment is incrementally reduced if they earn more than the Social Security earnings limit of $23,400 (2025 tax year) annually. This annuity offset penalty disincentivizes retired FAA controllers from making the decision to work as instructors at enhanced-collegiate training initiative programs.
  - o This penalty is currently waived for retired controllers who 1) teach at the FAA Academy or 2) work at a FAA Contract Tower. This provision provides parity by extending the waiver to retired controllers who teach as an air traffic control instructor at an Enhanced-CTI school.

- **FAA Academy and Collegiate Training Initiative Curriculum Review**
  - o Establishes an Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC), requiring the FAA to partner with academia and industry experts to review and make recommendations to update and modernize both the existing FAA Academy Curriculum (which is also used by enhanced-CTI institutions) and the Air

Traffic Skills Assessment, which is the entry-level employment aptitude assessment required by the FAA.

ATC Training Improvements & Retention Incentives

- **FAA Facility Training Equipment Improvements**
  - o Authorizes funding, at $20 million per year, for the procurement and placement of Tower Simulator Systems (TSS) at Air Traffic Control facilities nationwide, expanding upon Section 415 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.
  - o The National Air Space (NAS) Safety Review Team Report[1], released in November 2023, notes that the increased use of high-fidelity Tower Simulation Systems can reduce the time required to certify an air traffic controller by 27 percent.

- **Air Traffic Controller Qualification & Retention Enhancements**
  - o Establishes a new Certified Professional Controller Incentive, directing the FAA to coordinate with the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), through their collective bargaining agreement, to develop an incentive program for air traffic controller trainees upon completion of the CPC qualification.
  - o Establishes a new Air Traffic Controller Retention Incentive program, directing the FAA to coordinate with the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), through their collective bargaining agreement, to develop a retention incentive program for air traffic controllers.

Other Provisions

- **Air Traffic Controller Mental Health Improvements**
  - o Requires the FAA to partner with aviation industry stakeholders to create a training course to support the development of qualified aviation-savvy mental health providers and advanced training for Air Medical Examiners (AMEs).
  - o This provision reflects recommendations from the Mental Health & Aviation Medical Clearances Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC)[2] released in April 2024.

- **Report on the Airport Non-Cooperative Surveillance Radar Program (ANSR)**
  - o Requires the FAA to provide a written report on the status of the Airport Non-Cooperative Surveillance Radar Program (ANSR), including a determination of full funding needs for the ANSR program, a cost benefit analysis of the most effective solutions to provide ongoing ANSR services (including a comparison of a sustainment v. replacement approach), an analysis of how the FAA intends to provide commercial service airports with the necessary radar to detect and mitigate any threat posed by non-cooperative flying objects, including aircraft, unmanned aerial systems, balloons, an update on the radar divestiture program, and projected lifecycle support needs of the existing inventory of ASR-8s, 9s, and 11s.

---

[1] https://www.faa.gov/NAS_safety_review_team_report.pdf
[2] https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/Mental_Health_ARC_Final_Report_RELEASED.pdf