

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 26, 2011

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
S-230
United States Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator McConnell:

We write to urge you to work with your Republican conference to pass a clean extension of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) authorization. This legislation is essential to our nation and New Jersey.

As you know, Congress has passed 19 clean FAA extensions over the past four years, as well as one extension with bipartisan and unanimously supported aviation safety provisions. Clean extensions are merely a continuation of current funding and policy; they help to maintain critical programs while legislation is negotiated. The House of Representatives recently passed H.R. 2553, which contains a controversial and divisive policy provision that impacts air service to several states. This policy provision is part of the ongoing negotiations between the House and the Senate. Controversial policy provisions like this should not be in the extension. Senate Democrats have advanced a clean extension without policy riders in order to continue the FAA's important work, while negotiations of the FAA reauthorization are finalized. However, Senate Republicans have objected to passage of this critical extension. As a result, the FAA authorization expired at midnight on Friday, July 22, 2011.

In New Jersey, the FAA shutdown has furloughed approximately 650 workers at the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center near Atlantic City. These dedicated men and women are working to develop the Next Generation Air Transportation System and modernize our air traffic control system. Unfortunately, these employees have been sent home and their critical safety work has ground to a halt. The shutdown also impacts the ability of our state to move forward with important safety and capacity airport improvement projects.

We urge you and your conference to join Democrats to pass a clean extension of the FAA. We appreciate your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,


Frank R. Lautenberg Robert Menendez