

March 2, 2018

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 2019 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 \$172,000,000 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 2019 and extend the bill language that was adopted in previous spending bills. The \$172 million funding level for FY 2019 will fund all 254 contract towers currently in the program; annualize funding for towers that will be added in FY 2018, and provide full-year funding for several new airports expected to be added to the program in FY 2019.

The FAA Contract Tower Program has provided cost-effective and essential air traffic safety services for over three decades. Currently, 254 smaller airports in 46 states participate in the program, including one in New Jersey. Together these 254 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 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 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 36-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 (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



Martin H. Hiller  
President  
National Air Transportation Association



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



Mark S. Kimberling  
President  
National Association of State Aviation Officials



Peter F. Dumont  
President  
Air Traffic Control Association



Stephen A. Alterman  
President  
Cargo Airline Association