



STATEMENT OF THE

NATIONAL BUSINESS AVIATION ASSOCIATION

**ED BOLEN
PRESIDENT AND CEO**

BEFORE

THE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION, SPACE, AND INNOVATION

THE UNITED STATES SENATE

REGARDING:

**“FLYING ON EMPTY:
HOW SHUTDOWNS THREATEN AIR SAFETY, TRAVEL, AND THE ECONOMY”**

November 19, 2025

Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Duckworth, and Members of the Subcommittee on Aviation, Space, and Innovation, thank you for holding this hearing to address the impact of the 43-day lapse in federal funding on Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Transportation Safety Administration (TSA) services and the national economy. On behalf of the National Business Aviation Association's (NBAA's) 11,000-member companies, I am honored to provide this testimony for the record.

I would like to start by thanking the dedicated public servants who shouldered a tremendous burden, showing up day after day without compensation to maintain the safety, security and efficiency of the national airspace system—without their commitment and professionalism, America's air transportation system and the national economy would have come to a halt.

Business aviation is an important segment of the aviation industry.

Business aviation is an indispensable part of the aviation ecosystem, providing an efficient, effective and flexible transportation solution to users. It is essential to America's economy and local communities supporting more than 1.3 million jobs and contributing \$339.2 billion per year in economic activity. General aviation helps businesses be more competitive, especially those small and mid-sized enterprises, headquartered in small towns and rural areas that have little or no airline service.

Business aviation also provides emergency medical transportation, and delivers humanitarian aid in times of need. Business aircraft provide around 15,000 relief flights each year, responding to natural disasters, transporting organs, and taking cancer patients to treatment centers. With 46.7 million Americans living more than an hour away from a Level 1 or 2 trauma center, business aviation is more critical than ever.

The government shutdown impacted all segments of the aviation industry, including business and general aviation.

The 43-day government shutdown stalled critical FAA work that impacted business and general aviation safety oversight, certification, training and operations; it impacted an industry that serves as a lifeline to rural economies, provides emergency medical transportation and delivers humanitarian aid in times of need.

The most severe impacts occurred on November 6, when the FAA implemented an Emergency Order to reduce *all* flight operations, including commercial *and* business aircraft operations, at 40 U.S. airports. Just days later, on November 10, the FAA implemented additional restrictions, banning non-scheduled operations at 12 airports, disproportionately impacting business aviation, an industry that drives local economies, connects communities, and supports humanitarian missions every day. General aviation complied with the emergency order and avoided operating at the nation's busiest airports whenever possible to support the safety and efficiency of the system. The national airspace is a public resource open to all users. With the shutdown resolved, and moving forward, we ask Congress to ensure access remains equitable and available to every segment of the flying community.

Specifically, the government shutdown had a significant impact on business aviation as it delayed safety approvals, jeopardized investments, reduced safety margins, and restricted airspace capacity.

- The government shutdown forced the FAA to furlough safety inspectors, resulting in reduced services and significant delays to aviation businesses.
- The furloughs meant operators waited on certification approvals for more than a month which caused inefficient operations and prevented operators from using aircraft to their full capability.
- The furloughs halted new certification activities, resulting in certificate holders being unable to complete aircraft conformity checks, keeping some aircraft grounded.
- Inspectors did not approve revisions to manuals, delaying implementation of safety-enhancing procedures.
- Finally, furloughs meant inspectors were unable to review and approve the use of new training simulators, creating a backlog that will not begin to be addressed until March 2026 creating inefficiencies and sub-optimal safety.

Business Aviation supports critical modernization efforts and funding stability.

Congress must pass legislation to provide stable funding for the FAA during any future shutdown to mitigate harm to the safety and efficiency of the aviation system, the travelling public, and the national economy.

Long before the shutdown, Congress recognized that a modernized air traffic control system was a national imperative, essential to safety, and made an important down payment on needed reforms. The government shutdown threatened that progress and drew critical resources away from essential initiatives to expand controller hiring, improve training, and update technology and facilities. Business aircraft operators rely on a safe and efficient nation's air traffic control system and support a renewed focus and investment in these much needed reforms.

Congress must act now to ensure funding stability for the FAA, equitable airspace access and a returned focus on air traffic control modernization work.

- Congress must pass a full-year FY2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bill to ensure continued investment in controller staffing, aviation safety personnel, technicians, and the modernization of critical aviation infrastructure.
- We urge Congress to approve legislation to ensure user-funded aviation services continue in the event of another government shutdown. Airspace users pay billions in taxes and fees to maintain air traffic control services, safety and security and deserve uninterrupted delivery of those services. Legislation such as Chairman Moran's *Funding Stability Act of 2025*, and *The Aviation Funding Solvency Act* introduced in the House would ensure these services are uninterrupted.
- Congress must continue its critical work on airspace modernization, strengthening the staffing, technology, infrastructure and facilities to build the best air traffic control system in the world, enabling safe and efficient air transportation.

Ending the government shutdown was an essential first step. Next, Congress must establish funding stability to ensure aviation services continue in the event of another government shutdown and return focus to modernizing the air traffic control system to maximize safety and efficiency in the national airspace system and strengthen the resilience of the American economy.

Thank you for your consideration. I appreciate the Committee's careful oversight of our nation's aviation system and look forward to working with you to enhance aviation safety, improve the airspace system and maintain America's global leadership in aviation.