

SECURE

FROM COAST TO COAST:

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Advancing American Transportation



Secure from Coast to Coast: Advancing American Transportation

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American businesses and families can't afford a freight rail Goliath



By James Uthmeier, Florida Attorney General

Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern — already two of the largest railroads in the country — are trying to merge. Wall Street values the deal, first announced last summer, at \$85 billion. Together, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern would control half of all Class I freight rail in the United States. American businesses and consumers should be nervous.

If approved, this deal would create a behemoth spanning more than 50,000 route miles across 43 states, concentrating pricing power, raising shipping costs and creating a single point of failure for the American supply chain at a time when American manufacturing is back on the rise under President Donald Trump's leadership. When freight costs rise, so do the prices of everyday goods, electricity, housing and cars. Even though many Americans may not realize it, railroads haul the coal that fuels power plants, the lumber used to frame houses and the steel and parts used to build automobiles, among thousands of other commodities and finished goods. Freight rail is a vital component of American manufacturing and supply chains and allowing this industry to concentrate to the point where a single firm controls half of all rail traffic would be a dire and permanent mistake.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) is the federal agency tasked with reviewing the deal. It rejected Union Pacific's initial application, filed last December, as insufficient. Union Pacific filed an amended application April 30. In its amended application, Union Pacific claims that the transaction will result in 2.1 million truckloads of cargo shifting from trucks to rail, with annual savings for shippers totaling \$3.5 billion.

These claims sound too good to



Competition is a promise to everyday Americans that markets will serve them, not the other way around. When a deal threatens to distort markets and undermine President Trump's America First policies, we have a duty to voice our concerns.

be true because they probably are. Union Pacific says this shift will occur because a single large railroad can efficiently interchange cars in the Midwest and improve customer service. But the large railroads operating today already run highly efficient trains between the East and West Coasts, with coordinated pricing and customer service. The merger offers nothing new. And despite now claiming "shipper savings" for the first time since announcing the merger ten months ago, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern have consistently avoided committing to lowering their pricing. Moreover, Union Pacific claims it plans to increase rail volumes by 12% over the three years following the deal. But the company's track record calls this into question: its volumes have consistently declined over the past two

decades, while its rates and stock price have consistently risen. It will be STB's job to sort through the details of Union Pacific's forecasts and estimates, but common sense suggests these projections are unrealistic.

Other critical questions remain unanswered. Today, large railroads co-own terminals where cars are exchanged and operate joint ventures that facilitate the sharing of rail assets, such as box cars and flat cars used to transport intermodal containers. This merger would give Union Pacific control over several of these critical assets. Union Pacific says it "intends" to take steps to ensure these industry collaborations remain neutral and accessible to all railroads on equal terms, but it provides no details on how it will accomplish that. What will be sold, to whom, and at what price, to keep these

long-established joint ventures running smoothly and fairly? Neither the STB nor the industry should have to guess. We would be naïve to ignore that, post-merger, Union Pacific will have significant incentive to ensure whatever happens to these collaborations benefits itself and harms its rivals to the detriment of consumers.

STB's rules require that major rail mergers benefit the public interest and include actions that will not only preserve but also enhance competition. Despite the scope and scale of their merger, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern offer almost nothing on this front. They call their enhanced competition proposal "Committed Gateway Pricing," or CGP. Despite the grandiose label, the fine print of the proposal means that it applies to less than 1% of all freight traffic, and those that do qualify will likely get a higher rate than they are paying today. An analysis published in the magazine *Railway Age* concluded bluntly that "CGP does not in any way enhance competition."

As conservatives, we believe in free enterprise, not near-monopolies protected by paperwork and consultants. Competition is a promise to everyday Americans that markets will serve them, not the other way around. When a deal threatens to distort markets and undermine President Trump's America First policies, we have a duty to voice our concerns.

On the law and on the facts, this merger fails the STB's competition standard, fails the transparency test, and fails the commonsense check that says bigger isn't better when it wipes out competition and leaves consumers footing the bill. Absent real commitments and full candor from the merging parties, the STB should block this deal. As Florida's Attorney General, I stand with my colleagues across the country to defend competition, protect Florida's interests, and keep our economy moving forward.

James Uthmeier is Florida's 39th Attorney General.

Rail merger threatens America's future



By Chris Jahn

The story of America's climb to the summit of the global economy is inseparable from the story of railroads. Long before modern highways and air cargo networks, railroads connected distant regions, opened markets and moved the raw materials that powered growth. During the Industrial Revolution — one of the most consequential chapters in U.S. history — freight rail helped transform the nation into an industrial leader, supporting the rise of manufacturing.

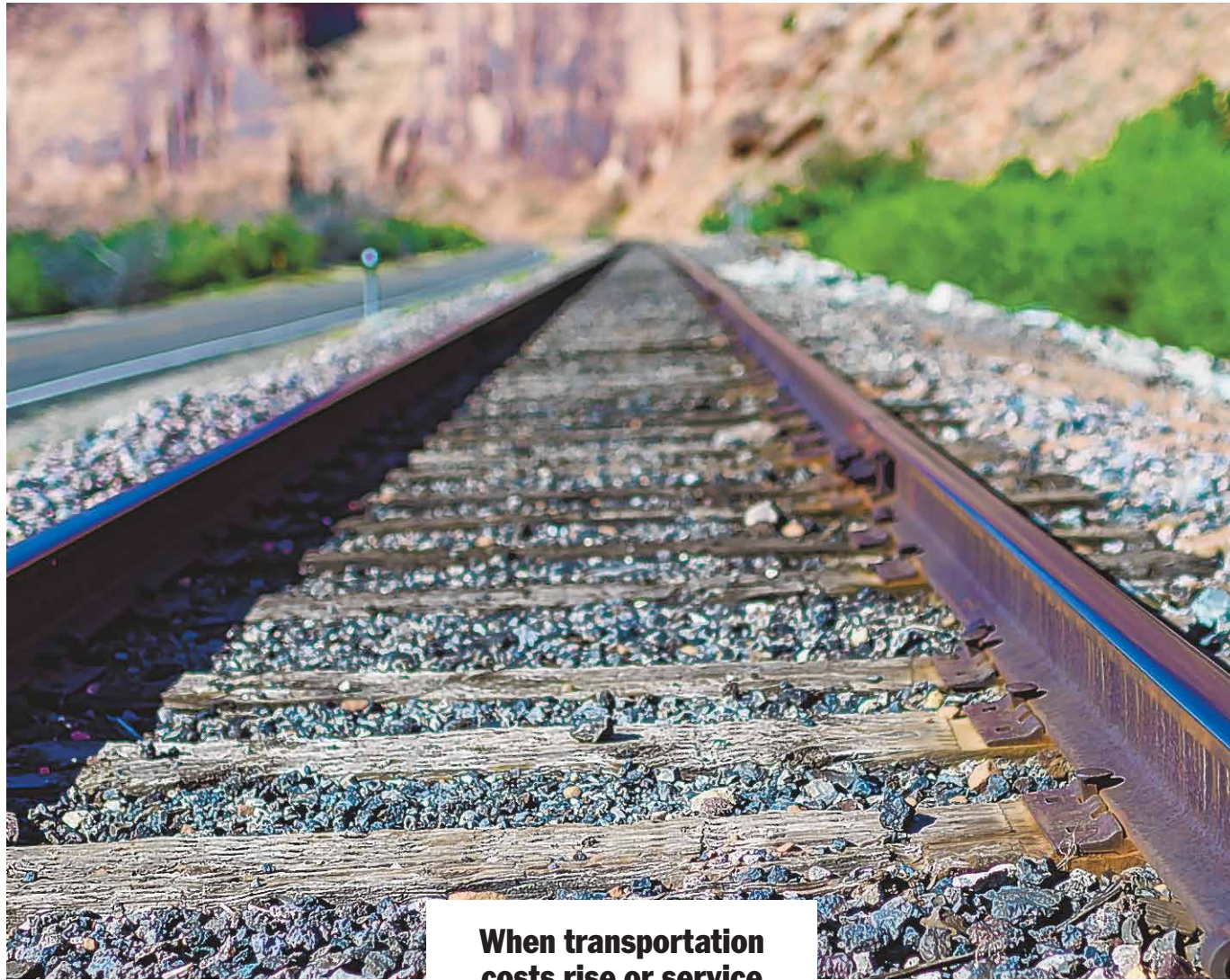
That legacy still matters today. America's economy runs on chemistry — from the medicines we take to the cars we drive, chemical manufacturing powers nearly every aspect of modern life. Rail isn't just a logistical concern for the chemical industry — it's a lifeline, carrying the essential inputs and finished products that underpin American agriculture, manufacturing and energy production.

But as with any major sector of the U.S. economy, the benefits of a strong freight rail system depend on an essential ingredient: competition. Right now, access to competitive and reliable freight rail service is being threatened by a merger that would give rise to a coast-to-coast rail monopoly.

The proposed merger between Union Pacific (UP) and Norfolk Southern (NS) would fundamentally reshape the freight rail landscape — and not in a good way. Combined, the two railroads would control nearly half of all U.S. rail traffic, creating an unprecedented concentration of market power in a system that depends on competitive balance to function properly.

Consolidating so much traffic under a single operator sets up a single point of failure at a time when policymakers are focused on strong supply chains, affordability and security.

For America's future, the implications are straightforward and serious. Less



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When transportation costs rise or service worsens, businesses pull back, delay investment or shift production — all putting American jobs at risk.

competition in the freight rail industry means higher costs, fewer options for shippers and increased pressure on supply chains. Those impacts would ripple through the broader economy, harming industries and raising prices for goods that rely on affordable and dependable rail service.

The consequences are also big when it comes to jobs. When transportation costs rise or service worsens, businesses pull back, delay investment or shift production — all putting American jobs at risk.

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) is the only federal agency with the authority to review this deal. It is the only entity between this merger and lasting harm that could reverberate throughout the economy.

History offers a clear warning. The 1996 Union Pacific-Southern Pacific merger led to severe congestion, widespread service failures and network paralysis that disrupted supply chains nationwide. The fallout was so significant that the STB imposed a moratorium on major rail mergers and rewrote its rules to protect competition and customers.

The Board's updated merger rules

set a clear standard: any proposed rail merger must serve the public interest. To meet this standard, the transaction must enhance freight rail competition, not diminish it.

The UP-NS merger fails this test. Rather than expanding competitive rail options, it would reduce them.

With so much at stake, it should come as no surprise that this mega rail merger proposal is setting off alarm bells across the country. A broad coalition representing key parts of the economy — the Stop the Rail Merger Coalition — has come together to oppose the deal, bringing together farmers, manufacturers, railroads, labor groups and trade associations such as the American Chemistry Council.

More than 100 state and federal policy makers, including attorneys general and agriculture secretaries, have

also raised concerns about the potential negative impacts of the merger.

Public opinion points in the same direction. Nearly three-quarters of Americans oppose the merger after learning about its impacts. Most voters believe it would increase shipping costs, raise prices on everyday goods and hurt jobs. Americans know a bad deal when they see one.

There is a better path forward. Railroads do not need to merge to improve efficiency or service for their customers. Recent cooperative efforts, including partnerships between BNSF and CSX, have demonstrated that coordination can enhance network performance without the disruption and risks of a costly merger.

The UP-NS merger would move the country in the wrong direction. It concentrates power, weakens competition, and puts jobs, supply chains, and America's future at risk.

The STB's mandate is clear. Its own rules require mergers to serve the public interest by enhancing competition. This one does not and must be rejected.

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Chris Jahn is the President and CEO of the American Chemistry Council.



**STOP THE
RAIL MERGER**
COALITION

THE UP/NS MERGER IS A BAD DEAL FOR AMERICA

A proposed merger between Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern railroads threatens to create a coast-to-coast monopoly—at the expense of American workers, businesses, and consumers. This costly deal threatens to:

- Drive up prices for shipping and everyday goods
- Put American jobs at risk across critical industries
- Weaken already strained supply chains

ALARM BELLS ARE RINGING NATIONWIDE

More than 100 state and federal policymakers—including attorneys general and agriculture leaders—are sounding the alarm about this unnecessary and costly deal. A wide coalition of farmers, manufacturers, railroads, and labor organizations have united in opposition to this unnecessary deal.

AMERICANS ARE PAYING ATTENTION—AND THEY'RE CONCERNED

When voters learn about the real-world impacts of this merger:

- 7 out of 10 oppose it
- Most believe it will increase shipping costs, raise prices on everyday goods, and hurt jobs

THE STAKES ARE TOO HIGH

Washington must stop this merger in its tracks before it harms American farmers, workers, manufacturers and consumers.

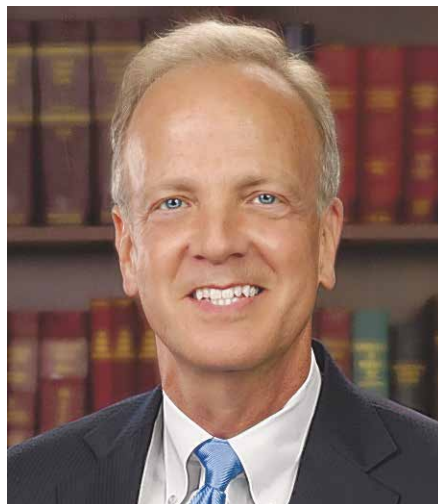
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Travelers walk through TSA security lines at George Bush Intercontinental Airport.

Why the US needs the SAFEGUARDS Act



**By U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran,
R-Kansas**

Every commercial airline ticket purchased in the United States for the past two decades has been charged with a congressionally mandated security fee, currently set at \$5.60 per one-way ticket.

The 9/11 Passenger Security Fee was created by Congress in the aftermath of one of the darkest days in our nation's history to strengthen aviation security, modernize screening technology and support the men and women tasked with protecting the traveling public. Americans have paid a mandatory fee every time they purchase an airline ticket with the understanding that those dollars would help keep our skies safe, and in 2025 those fees generated \$4.5 billion in revenue for the U.S. government.

For far too long, however, the original intent for these fees has not

matched reality.

Since 2014, billions of dollars collected from passengers have been diverted away from aviation security to other areas of federal spending. Regard-

millions of travelers every day.

The TSA screens millions of passengers and their luggage daily – providing services at 2,400 security lanes at the nation's 420 airports. Investing in airport

Americans deserve honesty and accountability from their government. When Congress imposes a fee with the agreement that it will help strengthen airport and airline security, those dollars should be dedicated to that purpose.

less of the merits of those programs, this practice raises a fundamental issue of trust. Americans deserve honesty and accountability from their government. When Congress imposes a fee with the agreement that it will help strengthen airport and airline security, those dollars should be dedicated to that purpose.

This practice of diverting funds weakens public confidence, increases strain on the aviation workforce and delays investment into critical security infrastructure and technology.

That is why I introduced the Spending Aviation Fees for Equipment, Guaranteeing Upgraded and Advanced Risk Detection and Safety (SAFEGUARDS) Act, bipartisan legislation that would return much of the passenger security fees to their intended purpose of improving aviation security and bolstering the safety and efficiency of U.S. air travel. By returning this fee to its original intent, the Transportation Security Administration would be able to invest in modernized screening equipment, improve detection capabilities and strengthen the system responsible for safeguarding

security modernization would have tangible benefits for travelers. Shortened wait times, improved security checkpoint experiences and strengthened threat detection capabilities all contribute to bolstering a system to work better for the traveling public.

However, the issue is not simply about convenience at the airport. Aviation connects communities, supports jobs and enables businesses to operate and grow. When our security infrastructure falls behind, the consequences extend beyond inconvenience. Delays and inefficiencies create real costs for passengers, airlines and the broader economy. Secure and efficient air travel is critical to our nation's economy and national security.

As airline travel continues to hit record highs, many airports, particularly in rural communities, face challenges to meet growing needs with limited resources. Making certain aviation security funding remains consistent will enable airports and federal agencies to better plan for the future.

This effort has brought together

support from both sides of the aisle. Aviation safety has never been a partisan issue – it is a shared national responsibility. Americans expect their government to focus on practical solutions that keep them safe while respecting how their money is used. The SAFEGUARDS Act reflects that expectation.

The United States has long maintained the safest aviation system in the world because we have never been willing to take that safety for granted. The lessons of September 11 remind us that vigilance is necessary and that investments in security cannot be delayed or ignored. As technology adapts, passenger volumes grow and threats continue to evolve, Congress must make certain that the resources dedicated to aviation safety are protected and properly utilized.

Every passenger who boards a flight should have confidence that their security comes first. Every taxpayer should know that the fees they pay are being used honestly and effectively. And communities that rely on the aviation industry should know that Congress is committed to strengthening the infrastructure and security systems that keep America connected.

The SAFEGUARDS Act is a straightforward, bipartisan step towards that goal. It honors the commitment we made to travelers and makes certain that our aviation system remains capable of meeting the challenges ahead. I urge my colleagues to pass this legislation.

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Sen. Jerry Moran is the senior U.S. Senator from Kansas. He chairs the Aviation, Space and Innovation subcommittee of the Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

We need the TRAFFIC ACT to keep predators out of our transportation system



By U.S. Sen. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tenn.

Human trafficking is one of the fastest growing and largest criminal industries in the world, generating hundreds of billions in illicit profits each year through the exploitation of more than 27 million people. Its victims are coerced into the worst abuse imaginable, including prostitution and forced labor, living in conditions that can only be described as modern-day slavery. While victims come from all walks of life and every community across our country, their experiences often share at least one common thread: their abusers exploited transportation systems to commit their crimes.

Nearly 80% of international human trafficking is carried out across official ports of entry, moving by bus, train, airplane, car and boat. In many cases, transportation is involved at every point of the crime. A 2021 survey of survivors found 81% were transported by their abusers during their recruitment, 76% during their exploitation and 52% during their escape.

Worse still, commercial drivers — using federally issued licenses — have been the very predators preying on America's most vulnerable. In 2014, a 55-year-old registered sex offender, Tony Eugene Wardlow, pleaded guilty to federal charges for using his commercial truck to transport a minor from Missouri to Texas to engage in illicit sexual activity. Two years before, commercial truck driver Kevin Donaldson of New York was convicted in federal court for transporting three of his underage relatives across state lines while sexually abusing them.

In response to cases like Wardlow's and Donaldson's, Congress passed the No Human Trafficking on our Roads Act, which President Donald Trump



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signed into law in 2018. The bipartisan legislation took a crucial step to prevent traffickers from reoffending, permanently barring anyone who uses a commercial motor vehicle to commit human trafficking from holding a federal commercial driver's license. Before its enactment, individuals who committed such offenses could keep the very federal licenses that enabled their abuse. The law ended that loophole.

While the passage of the No Human Trafficking on our Roads Act marked a big step in the fight to end this horrific practice, there's more work to be done. The law only covers offenders who used their commercial motor vehicle to engage in trafficking, meaning that traffickers who committed their crimes using personal vehicles can keep their commercial driver's licenses. And it narrowly applies to commercial driver's licenses — which are needed to operate trucks and buses — while leaving other federal transportation credentials untouched.

These gaps in the law unintentionally allow convicted traffickers to retain credentials of public trust they have no business holding. They are especially concerning as transnational criminal organizations — including the many cartels recently designated by the Trump administration as foreign terrorist organizations — develop increasingly sophisticated trafficking networks that

Under the TRAFFIC Act, anyone convicted of human trafficking would face a lifetime ban from possessing any federally regulated transportation credential. This would apply to convictions under federal, state, local, and Tribal law and to offenders who engage in trafficking in any fashion — with or without the use of their commercial vehicles.

exploit every mode of transportation into the United States.

Such loopholes are possible with even the best crafted legislation. But when discovered, it's Congress's responsibility to address them. That's why Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., and I introduced the Trafficker Restrictions for Aviation, Federal Freight, and Interstate Carriers (TRAFFIC) Act. This bipartisan legislation would close the gaps in the law and ensure that the Trump administration has more tools available to keep traffickers out of America's transportation system.

Under the TRAFFIC Act, anyone convicted of human trafficking would face a lifetime ban from possessing any federally regulated transportation credential. This would apply to convictions under federal, state, local, and Tribal law and to offenders who

engage in trafficking in any fashion — with or without the use of their commercial vehicles.

Crucially, the legislation would expand the scope of covered credentials from commercial driver's licenses to those held by pilots, locomotive operators, train conductors, and merchant mariners. The TRAFFIC Act would also apply to any license issued by the Department of Homeland Security or the Department of Transportation concerning the operation of any form of transportation, meaning that any future credentials would fall under its purview.

There's a reason why the TRAFFIC Act is endorsed by both the Association of American Railroads and the American Trucking Associations: It's common sense. Congress has already recognized the urgent need to keep traffickers off our roadways. With our legislation, we can strengthen that enforcement and ensure that these predators are also prevented from flying our planes, operating our trains or piloting our merchant vessels. That way, we can make certain that the American transportation system serves the American people — not the predators who have exploited it to target the most vulnerable among us.

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Sen. Marsha Blackburn is the senior senator for Tennessee and serves on the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee.



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Passengers wait in line at a TSA screening checkpoint at Denver International Airport.

Paying air traffic controllers and TSA during shutdowns is good for America



By Chris Sununu

Thanks to a downpayment in the One Big Beautiful Bill, America is on its way to becoming the most technologically advanced and efficient air traffic control system in the world. DOT Secretary Sean Duffy and FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford have done incredible work: replacing antiquated copper lines with fiber telecommunication systems, installing new radars and radios, and hiring more air traffic controllers.

But up on Capitol Hill, government gridlock is threatening to stall the incredible progress that has been made. Government shutdowns are becoming

longer and more frequent, wrecking more than just weekend travel plans.

This past year, Americans lived through the longest government shutdown in U.S. history — and millions of travelers suffered the unprecedented consequences, even though these travelers paid taxes to fund our nation's air traffic control services.

Starting in mid-February, when the shutdown began, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) workers across the nation went more than a month without

President Donald Trump restoring TSA pay, the operational strain subsided. While Americans were grateful to move on, Congress shouldn't.

White House economists estimate that the effects of that shutdown, including delayed and canceled flights, cost the U.S. economy at least \$2.5 billion.

And many of the consequences outlasted the shutdown itself. More than 1,000 TSA officers quit — joining more than 1,000 others who left during the 43-day government shutdown last fall.

Thanks to a memorandum from President Donald Trump restoring TSA pay, the operational strain subsided. While Americans were grateful to move on, Congress shouldn't.

pay. That caused staffing shortages that plunged airports into chaos at the height of spring travel. Average security wait times reached historic highs, and viral videos showed lines snaking out of terminals and into parking garages.

TSA agents — tasked with the crucial job of keeping our airports and airplanes secure — were dealing with enormous emotional stress and serious financial strain. Unable to pay for rent, gas or groceries, TSA agents relied on second jobs, gift cards from airports or donations from their communities.

Thanks to a memorandum from

They won't be quickly replaced, as it can take up to six months to train a new officer. And as more Americans see how frequently TSA employees face financial instability, the job will likely become even harder to recruit for.

Past shutdowns have affected other critical parts of the aviation system — including air traffic controllers. In fact, during last fall's shutdown, the impact to controllers was so severe, the FAA mandated that airlines cut hundreds of flights to maintain our gold safety standard. The travel and tourism industry alone lost more than \$6 billion because

of that shutdown.

As partisan disputes increasingly put government funding at risk, it is untenable for America's air travel system to remain in the crossfire. Congress must act to guarantee stable pay for the workers who keep that system running — TSA officers and air traffic controllers alike — and ensure this does not happen again.

The best solution is a functioning appropriations process that keeps our critical federal agencies funded and running. But the American people also deserve a shutdown insurance policy for when this system falls behind schedule or fails. Congress should enact a permanent solution to protect travelers and our economy: a guarantee that the people who keep America's aviation system running will receive stable pay during shutdowns. Unrelated political disputes should never again be allowed to affect essential aviation safety and security employees.

As we look to America's next 250 years, there is no doubt aviation will be taken to new heights.

Industry works every day to make air travel safer, cleaner and more accessible. Congress must do its part and pass a durable solution that safeguards the reliability of our air travel system and the people who keep it running safely and securely.

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Chris Sununu is president and CEO of Airlines for America.



WE'VE SEEN THIS TOO MUCH RECENTLY.

Congress, find a permanent solution to **pay federal aviation workers** during government shutdowns.

Learn more at PayFederalAviationWorkers.com.



Americans need to be protected from cargo theft



By U.S. Sen. Todd Young, R-Ind.

In the fall of 2024, PFL Logistics – a third-party logistics company in Evansville, Ind. – lost a \$60,000 shipment that was stolen after a trusted carrier was compromised. As PFL worked to figure out what happened during the delivery process, it was forced to cover the costs of the missing shipment, a massive blow to this Hoosier company.

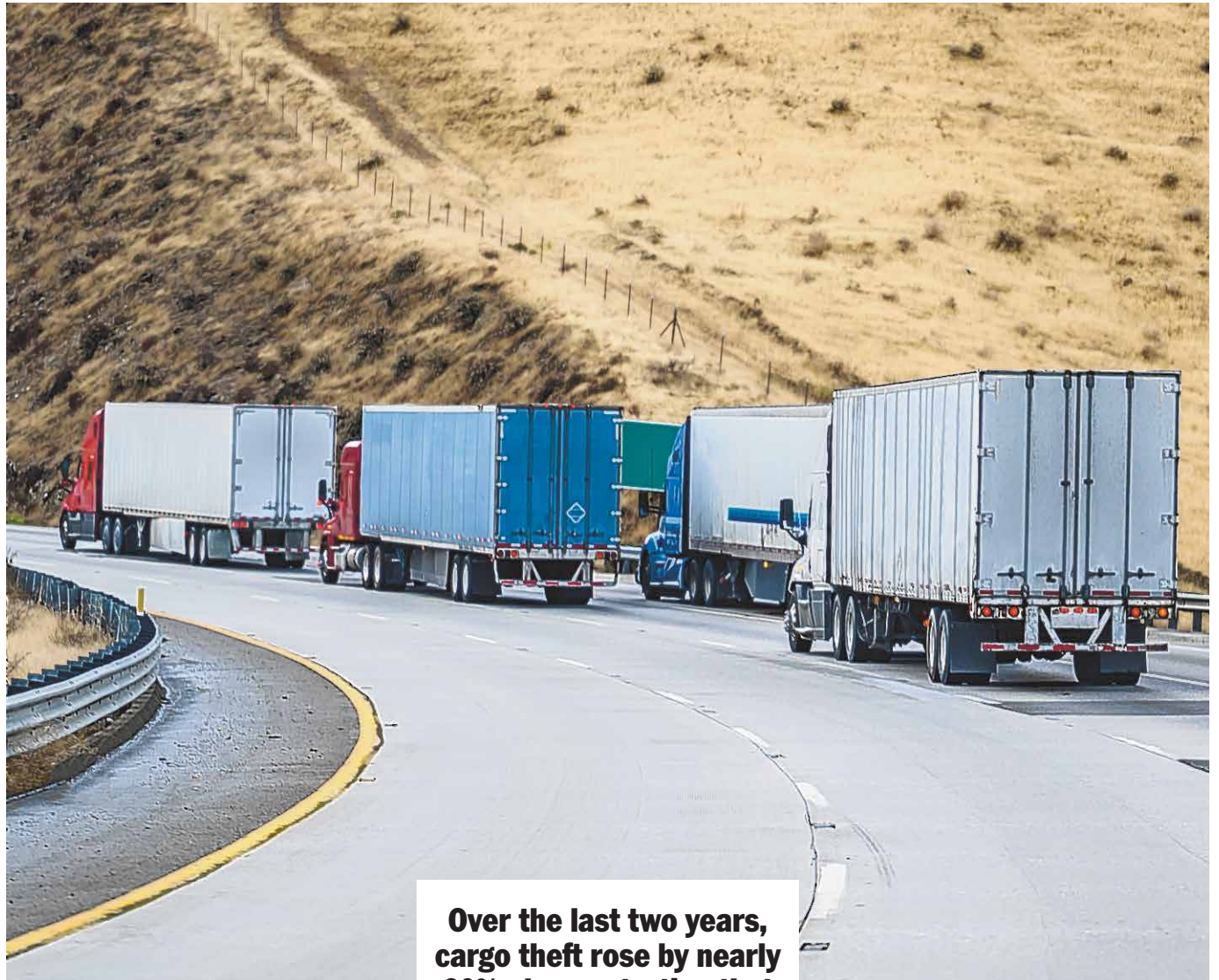
A year later, a Grant County, Indiana-based bitcoin company reported that its semi-trailer was hijacked with 1,000 bitcoin machines in the cab. The cost of this technology was estimated at roughly \$700,000.

Unfortunately, these aren't one-off incidents. They are part of a larger issue: the record-breaking rise in cargo theft across the United States. For many companies, especially small businesses, cargo theft is a devastating loss that can often force higher prices, delayed deliveries and supply shortages. As a result, American families end up footing the bill or dealing with the impact of these crimes.

But cargo theft is more than just an incredibly costly; it is also a threat to our national and economic security.

Cargo theft is driven by both domestic and international groups, and these criminals are using increasingly sophisticated, fraudulent tactics such as fictitious pickups, double brokering scams and hostage loads to steal shipments without detection. When a shipment is stolen, supply chains critical to our economy are disrupted. Simultaneously, criminals use cargo theft to fund other illegal activities like drug smuggling and human trafficking.

Over the last two years, cargo theft rose by nearly 60%, demonstrating that while authorities are aware of this growing threat, not enough is being done to identify and prevent these crimes from happening.



Over the last two years, cargo theft rose by nearly 60%, demonstrating that while authorities are aware of this growing threat, not enough is being done to identify and prevent these crimes from happening.

Currently, inconsistent standards across states and localities lead to a lack of enforcement, misclassification of crimes, and chronic underreporting of cargo theft. Additionally, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, which regulates motor carriers, lacks adequate tools to identify fraudulent actors or remove them from its system. The agency also does not possess the statutory authority to assess civil penalties for violations of its safety or commercial regulations.

A recent audit by the Department of Transportation revealed widespread negligence by states that were illegally issuing non-domiciled Commercial Driver's Licenses (CDLs) and uncovered glaring compliance failures in several states, including Illinois, California and New York. These failures have opened the door for unauthorized drivers to transport domestic cargo, creating additional vulnerabilities.

As Chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Surface Transportation, Freight, Pipelines and Safety, I believe

that Americans deserve better than this. Our citizens deserve safe and reliable supply chains and confidence that our nation will not allow large-scale crime like cargo theft to continue to go unchecked.

To address this challenge, I recently introduced the SAFER Transport Act. This comprehensive legislation would strengthen federal efforts to prevent, detect and punish cargo theft across America's transportation network. It would also coordinate interagency and government collaboration, eliminate duplicate carrier certifications that allow widespread fraud, close loopholes exploited by foreign dispatch agencies and stiffen penalties for

fraudulent certifications.

Additionally, my bill would ensure only authorized drivers transport domestic cargo by strengthening CDL issuance requirements, mandating monthly state reporting on CDLs and enhancing oversight and accountability of CDL training providers.

These are important steps to take to strengthen our transportation infrastructure, combat these crimes that are hurting consumers and businesses, and ensure our roads are safe for all Americans.

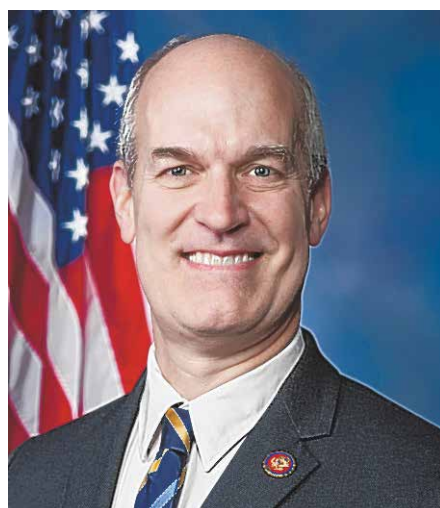
I will continue to work with my colleagues on the Senate Commerce Committee to move this legislation through the Senate. Congress should work together to stop the ongoing rise in cargo theft and protect American citizens and businesses.

Sen. Todd Young is the senior U.S. Senator from Indiana. He serves on the U.S. Senate Committees on Finance; Commerce, Science & Transportation; Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.



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Pass the ALERT Act to prevent future air tragedies



By U.S. Rep. Rick Larsen, D-Wash.

Last year, the United States experienced its deadliest aviation accident in 25 years when American Airlines Flight 5342, on its way from Wichita to Washington National Airport (DCA), collided with an Army Black Hawk helicopter flying a routine training mission — resulting in 67 tragic deaths.

What the families and loved ones of those lost in this tragedy have gone through is unimaginable, and my deepest condolences remain with them.

Congress owes it to these families and to the flying public to pass an aviation safety bill that prevents future crashes.

That's why House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves, R-Mo., and I — alongside House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, R-Ala., and Ranking Member Adam Smith, D-Wash., — introduced the Airspace Location and Enhanced Risk Transparency (ALERT) Act.

surveillance technology that, when combined with other applications, can give pilots real-time traffic and weather data directly in the cockpit. By mandating that technology, aircraft will be able to detect when other planes or helicopters are too close and adjust their routes to avoid collisions.

Congress owes it to these families and to the flying public to pass an aviation safety bill that prevents future crashes.

My House colleagues and I waited for the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to complete its thorough investigation — determining the probable cause of the incident and identifying every factor at play — so we could address all the safety failures leading to this horrific crash.

This patience proved to be prudent. After a year of investigating, the NTSB released its final report in February, which offered the Departments of Transportation and Defense 50 new safety recommendations to prevent future safety incidents.

Enter: the ALERT Act.

This bipartisan, bi-committee bill addresses all 50 of the NTSB's safety recommendations to protect travelers. At the center of the ALERT Act is its requirement for nearly all aircraft to be equipped with ADS-B In, a GPS-like

While ADS-B In technology has been a focal point of the lawmaking conversation, it's just one piece of the safety puzzle. Importantly, the ALERT Act also makes changes to improve the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) safety culture — such as improving flight data sharing between it and the Department of Defense. The bill also supports air traffic controllers by preventing excessive air traffic management on-duty hours, requiring training to help controllers better respond to unexpected threats and errors and developing a tool to improve controllers' ability to address safety risks. And by permanently closing Helicopter Route 4 near DCA, the ALERT Act ensures that the flight path from the devastating DCA midair collision will never be flown again.

The final version of ALERT incorporates critical feedback from key aviation

stakeholders — including NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy—to ensure it is truly comprehensive and implements all the NTSB's recommendations. Thanks to the aviation community's input and the tireless advocacy of the victims' families, we got our bill to the right place.

As a result, the ALERT Act recently passed on the House floor with overwhelming bipartisan support and just 10 “no” votes. That's the result of a deliberative, transparent, collaborative process — something we try to make a habit of at the T&I Committee.

Congress cannot wait any longer to act on safety. That is why I am committed to working with my Senate colleagues to get a final comprehensive aviation safety bill to the President's desk as soon as possible.

Rep. Rick Larsen has been serving as Ranking Member of the House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure since the 118th Congress and has served on the Committee since arriving in the House in 2001. The Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure, the largest Committee in Congress by membership, has broad jurisdiction over the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Coast Guard, Amtrak, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the General Services Administration, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Economic Development Administration and other agencies.

Secondhand smog is killing us. It's time we treated it that way



**By Katie Huffling, DNP,
RN, CNM, FAAN**

Nurses have held the hand of a child struggling to breathe. Nurses have watched a grandmother's oxygen levels drop during an air quality alert. Nurses have seen healthy adults admitted with sudden respiratory or cardiac events on days when the air outside looked clean but wasn't. After more than two decades as a nurse, I know what air pollution does to the body. What I'm less sure of is why we keep treating it like it doesn't exist.

We've been here before. For decades, Americans shared enclosed spaces with cigarette smoke while the science quietly, then loudly, made the case: secondhand smoke kills. It took years of medical evidence, public education, and political will to change America's smoking culture. But eventually we did. Not because smokers were villains, but because the people around them had a right to breathe, and science told us that secondhand smoke exposure is deadly.

Today, we have another secondhand pollution problem threatening clean air. Call it secondhand smog. And it comes from cars, trucks, and buses, large semis and other freight trucks.

Transportation is the single largest source of air pollution in the United States. Every day, millions of vehicles exhale a toxic mixture of nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, climate pollution and volatile organic compounds into the air that everyone, drivers and non-drivers alike, breathe. The people most exposed aren't always behind the wheel. They're the kids at the bus stop, or worse, on the bus. The elderly woman on her front porch two blocks from the freeway. The construction worker eating lunch at a job site near a congested road. They didn't choose to



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**Tailpipe pollution is
a public health crisis
hiding in plain sight,
distributed across
every commute
and every breath.**

inhale it. They don't have a choice.

Clinically, the consequences are not abstract. Tailpipe pollution is directly linked to asthma attacks, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cardiovascular disease, stroke, and lung cancer. Fine particulate matter, the kind produced by gas and diesel-powered engines and power plants, is small enough to cross from the lungs directly into the bloodstream. It inflames arterial walls. It stresses the heart. Research shows that as clean car adoption increases in a community, local air pollution levels measurably drop. The reverse is also true: more combustion vehicles, more pollution, more patients.

Low-income communities and communities of color bear a disproportionate burden of this exposure, often living closer to high-traffic corridors and industrial routes. These are not communities with the political capital to demand cleaner air or the financial resources to relocate. As nurses, we can treat the symptoms, but we cannot treat the ZIP code or the source.

This is why the ongoing rollback of clean vehicle standards is so alarming from a public health standpoint.

Stronger fuel economy and tailpipe pollution standards don't just benefit the environment. They reduce the concentration of pollutants in the air outside schools, hospitals, and homes. They are, in a very literal sense, a public health intervention, one that costs nothing for the people breathing the air and saves billions in downstream medical costs.

Cleaner cars take this further. A car that produces zero tailpipe pollution, for instance, is a car that does not contribute to secondhand smog. Widespread EV adoption doesn't just help the person in the driver's seat save money on gas and maintenance; it helps the child on the sidewalk breathe. That's not a partisan argument. That's physiology.

When the science on secondhand smoke became undeniable, we didn't simply ask smokers to be more considerate. We changed the rules to protect people. We decided collectively that

the freedom to smoke did not extend to forcing others to bear the consequences. The same logic applies here.

The freedom to drive is an American value. The freedom to drive is about lower fuel costs, cleaner air, and energy independence. It doesn't require four years of construction detours or thousands of dollars in tolls.

I am not asking people to give up their cars. I am asking policymakers to take seriously what medical science has established for years: tailpipe pollution is a public health crisis hiding in plain sight, distributed across every commute and every breath. Cleaner cars and trucks, stronger standards and a real commitment to electrification are not luxuries or political preferences. They are the prescription for a health problem.

We eventually recognized secondhand smoke for what it was. We changed course. We can do it again with second-hand smog if we take the threat seriously.

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Katie Huffling, DNP, RN, CNM, FAAN, is a certified nurse-midwife and is the Executive Director of the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments.

SECOND HAND SMOG IS REAL

Every day, kids and families breathe pollution from nearby trucks and buses

SECOND HAND SMOG HARMS EVERYONE NEARBY



YOU DON'T HAVE TO DRIVE TO BREATHE IT



CONGRESS CAN CLEAR THE AIR

TELL CONGRESS: PROTECT US FROM SECOND HAND SMOG



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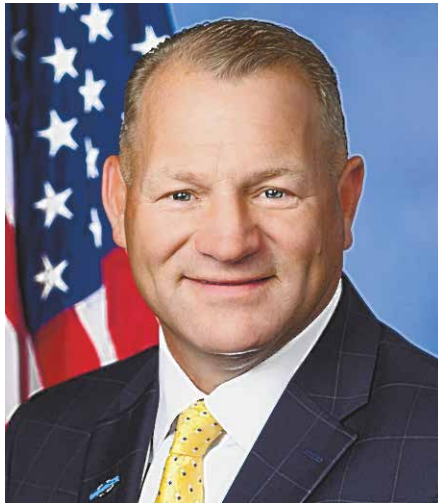


Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments



Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments

We need experienced pilots in our skies: Raise the pilot age



By U.S. Rep. Troy E. Nehls,
R-Texas

Did you know commercial airline pilots are forced to retire at the age of 65? In fact, commercial pilots are in one of the few professions that has a mandatory retirement age.

In 1959, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) implemented the Airline Age 60 rule, requiring all commercial airline pilots, or pilots who fly planes with more than 35 passengers, to retire at age 60, regardless of their health or experience. In 2007, 48 years later, Congress passed legislation to raise the mandatory retirement age for commercial pilots from 60 to 65, which was signed into law by President George W. Bush.

Flash forward: today, the mandatory retirement age for commercial pilots is still 65, despite the glaring pilot shortage we are experiencing, and air travel is at an all-time high in the U.S. It's important to note that not all pilots flying in our National Airspace System (NAS) are subject to this same arbitrary upper age limit. In fact, most pilots flying general aviation aircraft under Part 91, whether for personal use or under other commercial operations like Part 135 (on-demand air charters), there is no upper age limit imposed by the FAA, provided they meet medical and proficiency standards. Effectively, any celebrity, business executive or even sitting U.S. Senators who fly private could have a pilot in the cockpit who is over the age of 65. Other countries, like Canada, have no upper age limit.

In 2023, the CEO of the Regional Airlines Association (RAA) testified before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and said that over the next 15 years, nearly 50% of commercial airline pilots would be forced to



There is simply no substitute for experience. The traveling public deserves to have the most skilled pilots in the cockpit, and I have a bill that would ensure just that.

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retire due to the mandated retirement age. This expected significant loss of experienced pilots will not only add to the pilot shortage we are currently experiencing but could also contribute to higher airline ticket prices.

By requiring all pilots flying under Part 121 (commercial transport) to retire at 65, regardless of medical or demonstrated proficiency levels, we are forcing out thousands. These are the talented professionals in the airline industry who have developed unique experience through completing tens of thousands of flight hours, handling a variety of emergency scenarios, navigating complex operational environments and honing split-second decision-making capabilities. There is simply no substitute for experience. The traveling public deserves to have the most skilled pilots in the cockpit, and I have a bill that would ensure just that.

My legislation, the Let Experienced Pilots Fly Act, would modestly raise the mandated retirement age for commercial pilots from 65 to 67, all the while maintaining the same rigorous medical and training requirements that all other pilots in the industry are expected to maintain. In 2023, my bill was included in the House-passed Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024 but was unfortunately taken

out by the U.S. Senate in large part due to Sen. Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., Senate Democrats, and misguided and misleading lobbying efforts.

Unfortunately, there are certain groups, namely the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), that are dug in with their activism and have relentlessly fought against raising the mandatory retirement age for commercial pilots, despite many of ALPA's own members supporting the initiative. This out-of-touch organization's rhetoric and twisted narrative aren't based on data and science, but rather emotion and their own self-interest, convenience, and economics.

My office consistently receives calls from commercial pilots who are forced to retire on their 65th birthday, despite still passing their medical exams and check rides on a routine basis. Every time a pilot is forced to retire at the age of 65, we lose proficient aviation

professionals who have invaluable knowledge and skills, and ultimately, the traveling public pays the price.

As air travel continues to reach record highs, the need for skilled pilots only increases.

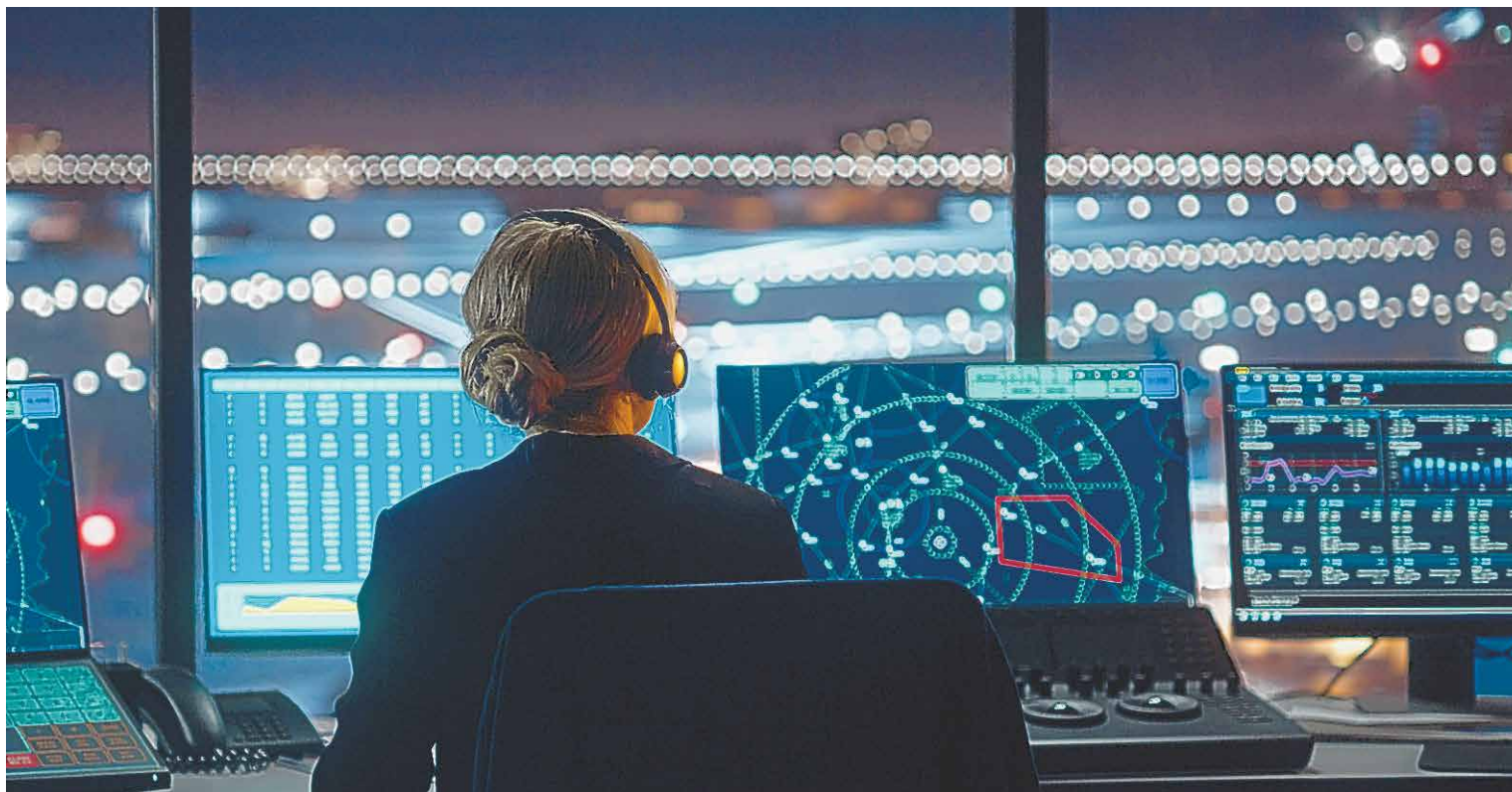
We shouldn't be forcing seasoned aviation professionals to retire when the need for their expertise only continues to grow. Raising the age to 67 enhances safety by retaining experienced professionals, alleviating shortages, and reflecting medical reality.

As Chairman of the House Aviation Subcommittee, I'm calling on Congress to do the right thing and pass my bill, the Let Experienced Pilots Fly Act, to permanently codify my proposal into law.

My bill has the support of both House and Senate leadership and numerous industry organizations. It's time to get on board and keep experienced pilots in our skies.

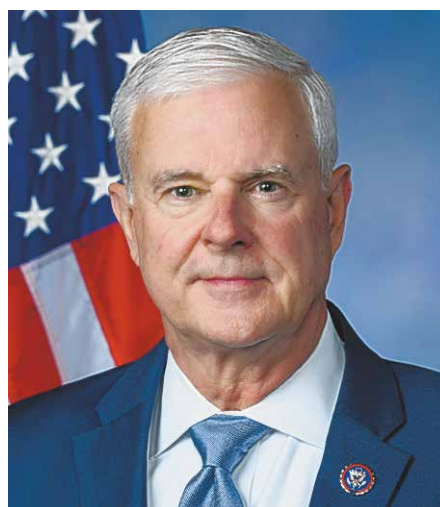
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Rep. Troy E. Nehls represents the 22nd Congressional District of Texas.

In the 119th Congress, Rep. Nehls serves as the Chairman of the House Aviation Subcommittee. He previously served as the Chairman of the House Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials Subcommittee. Prior to serving in Congress, Rep. Nehls served in law enforcement for nearly 30 years.



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Protecting America's skies and aviation excellence



By U.S. Rep. Steve Womack, R-Ark.

On a brisk December day in 1903, Orville Wright became the first person in the world to successfully take flight in a powered airplane. This historic event catalyzed American aviation excellence, establishing the United States as a global leader in aviation innovation.

However, that lasting reputation is in jeopardy due to an outdated air traffic control (ATC) system that negatively impacts passengers, pilots, and controllers alike.

Unlike many modern technologies, such as cell phones or televisions, that have radically evolved over the past 40 years, our ATC system has stayed stagnant. Many controllers are still

dependent on strips of paper to track flights or computers running on editions of Microsoft Windows that were released in the 1990s. These outdated systems are inefficient, prone to failure, hazardous, and becoming increasingly costly to maintain — a reality we cannot afford as the demand for air travel continues to grow.

These outdated [ATC] systems are inefficient, prone to failure, hazardous, and becoming increasingly costly to maintain – a reality we cannot afford as the demand for air travel continues to grow.

But our operational deficiencies are a symptom of the underlying problem.

For decades, our federal government has poured taxpayer dollars into maintaining an increasingly antiquated ATC system. Approximately 90% of appropriated federal dollars for the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Facilities and Equipment (F&E) budget goes toward maintaining these already outdated systems — leaving only 10% for infrastructure modernization.

At the risk of oversimplifying, think of our ATC predicament in terms of deciding whether or how to repair an old vehicle. At some point, a car owner must decide whether it makes sense to keep pouring money into something that will continue to break down or invest in a newer vehicle that will last. The upfront cost may be higher, but choosing an updated model can be the more efficient

and responsible decision.

Congress provided that type of upfront funding last year in the Working Families Tax Cuts law and my Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) and Related Agencies Appropriations bill.

As Chairman of the House Appropriations THUD Subcommittee, I increased

funding for the FAA by \$1.22 billion over FY 2025 enacted levels, providing \$4 billion for FAA facilities and equipment to replace aged telecommunication infrastructure in ATC towers and provide necessary resources to hire 2,500 new air traffic controllers.

These efforts were complemented by the funds allocated to the FAA through the Working Families Tax Cuts law specifically for modernization efforts. The agency is moving swiftly to put these dollars to good work upgrading ATC systems in airports across the country. These updates include switching from paper flight strips to electronic flight strips, replacing aging radar and providing controllers with new digital capabilities in towers — all things that give controllers more time to monitor the actual aircraft themselves.

I am also proud that some of this

modernization work is happening where I call home: Arkansas's Third Congressional District.

Recently, I welcomed FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford to Northwest Arkansas, where we saw firsthand how FAA funding is helping to transform ATC systems. In Fayetteville, we saw newly installed voice switch technology at Drake Field which helps controllers and pilots communicate better. This installation at Drake Field was one of the first modernization efforts implemented using funds from the Working Families Tax Cuts law.

At the Northwest Arkansas National Airport, or XNA, we cut the ribbon on a brand-new ATC tower, which was funded in part through an FAA grant and community project funding I secured through the appropriations process. The completion of both projects helps meet the needs of our rapidly growing region.

As I work on the FY 2027 THUD appropriations bill, I look forward to continuing to support the FAA's modernization efforts with Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and Administrator Bedford at the helm. The investments we make today will pay dividends in the future and ensure that our nation's longstanding reputation for aviation excellence extends another century.

Rep. Steve Womack has represented the 3rd District of Arkansas since 2011. He serves as chairman of the House Appropriations Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Subcommittee.

A \$580 billion reason why bipartisanship still works



By Nile Elam

In Washington, bipartisanship has fallen out of fashion.

Working across the aisle is too often treated as a concession that you can't get everything you want. In an era when major legislation routinely passes on party-line votes, the instinct to compromise has been worn away. And that's a problem.

The BUILD America 250 Act will advance national prosperity because it represents a renewed commitment to mobility, safety and economic growth.

At the National Asphalt Pavement Association, we've long known that good infrastructure policy isn't a Republican idea or a Democratic one. There is no such thing as a red highway or a blue bridge. Our long-held priorities don't belong to a political party.

Our priorities benefit every citizen: robust federal investment in our nation's millions of road miles, modernizing aging infrastructure without unnecessary delay and protecting the workers who build and maintain it every day.

The roads that move goods to market, connect communities to opportunity, and get workers home safely are party-neutral. So too is our shared commitment to keeping American moving.

That's part of why the BUILD America 250 Act is such a significant moment — not just for what it does, but for how it came to be. Introduced jointly by House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Sam Graves, R-Mo., and Ranking Member Rick Larsen, D-Wash., this bill is a product of genuine compromise: two leaders from opposite sides of the aisle who chose

progress over politics.

The result, the BUILD America 250 Act, takes meaningful steps to advance the maintenance, safety and long-term strength of our nation's surface transportation network, delivering for citizens who depend on it every day.

The BUILD America 250 Act Will Propel Our Economy

This act's \$580 billion investment in America's surface transportation network marks one of the most significant

- The average American driver lost a full work week to congestion in 2024, according to INRIX. That's time away from family, work and life that an improved road network could help reclaim.

- Two-thirds of America's \$18 trillion in annual freight moves by truck, the U.S. Census Bureau found, meaning your in-store and online purchases travel the same roads this bill will strengthen.

- And with USDOT reporting over 40,000 traffic fatalities, this is also an investment in keeping Americans safe.



infrastructure commitments in decades, providing the resources and long-term certainty our nation needs. By concentrating on what a surface transportation bill should do — roads, highways, bridges, rail and transit — it reflects a disciplined recognition that federal infrastructure dollars are most effective when they're focused on moving people and goods safely and efficiently.

Every state will receive increased federal funding for critical roadway, highway and bridge construction. From urban corridors in the Northeast to rural communities in the Southwest, these dollars will reach every corner of the country on projects big and small, spurring American progress for years to come.

- Every \$1 billion in public infrastructure investment creates 13,000 jobs, according to the White House Council of Economic Advisers — this bill could support up to 7.5 million jobs nationwide.

For asphalt producers, equipment suppliers and the 350,000 workers who power this industry, this investment will provide resources and long-term certainty to plan, invest and grow. For states, it means reliable funding to address critical infrastructure needs. And for every American, it means first-class roads well into the future.

This Bill Is More Than a Number

The BUILD America 250 Act will advance national prosperity because it represents a renewed commitment to mobility, safety and economic growth. The funding matters and so does the vision behind it: a modern surface transportation network built to keep America competitive for decades to come.

The bill improves work zone safety — one of our top priorities — with policies to keep roadworkers and drivers safe by adding training grants and a teen

driver awareness program. We particularly support the interagency working group convening federal partners and industry stakeholders like asphalt producers and pavers, demonstrating this will be an ongoing area of emphasis.

The long-term solvency of the Highway Trust Fund has been a foundational concern for our industry for years, and we appreciate the recognition that all road users should contribute to the fund. Modest electric and hybrid vehicle user fees are a meaningful first step to address long-term solvency and enhance equity across all drivetrains.

Permitting reform is an issue we have pursued through multiple reauthorization cycles, with the urgency for meaningful action only growing. We welcome the bill's pragmatic approach to removing bureaucratic obstacles that slow project delivery and consume resources that communities need in the field.

Our Work Is Just Getting Started

There are only about four months remaining before the current surface transportation law expires. We must all get behind this bipartisan, multi-year reauthorization package, rather than reverting to short-term extensions.

Extensions aren't neutral. Highway projects are planned years in advance, so states, contractors and communities rely on predictable funding to schedule projects, sign contracts and invest for the long term. When that certainty disappears, costs increase and project delays follow. During previous reauthorization gaps, states postponed hundreds of millions of dollars in projects — wasting time, squandering opportunity and compounding delays.

The stakes are even higher today. Highway construction costs have risen dramatically, and thus a flat extension of current funding levels would effectively mean fewer projects, slower progress and more deferred maintenance piling up.

The T&I Committee has shown the nation what's possible when leaders choose collaboration. Now the full House, Senate and White House must match that example and deliver the long-term certainty, modernized network, and reliable infrastructure that Americans deserve.

Nile Elam is vice president for Government Affairs at the National Asphalt Pavement Association, which represents the interests of asphalt mixture producers, contractors, suppliers, and consultants to advance asphalt pavements as an essential part of sustainable transportation infrastructure that paves the way for thriving communities and commerce.



ASPHALT KEEPS AMERICA MOVING.

More than 94% of roads and highways are surfaced with asphalt pavements. The industry provides more than 350,000 men and women with meaningful work. And there's an asphalt mix plant in virtually every Congressional district. We're actively invested in every community, facilitating connection and commerce.

As the industry's national voice, NAPA works with Congress, the Administration, Departments of Transportation, and numerous other stakeholders and partners to engineer smooth, safe, long-lasting roads. Passing a robust multi-year surface transportation package this year will ensure the quality and longevity of our roads, support communities across the nation, and strengthen our national economic competitiveness – paving the way for American success.

▶ **Asphalt. America rides on us.**



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Rural airports need financing that works



By U.S. Rep. Jeff Hurd, R-Colo.

Across Western and Southern Colorado, infrastructure does not always look the way people in Washington think it does.

For rural communities, infrastructure can mean a single regional flight that connects a town to the rest of the country. It can mean a runway that allows local businesses to reach customers, hospitals to receive critical access, or tourists to reach the communities that depend on outdoor recreation and travel to support local jobs.

When those systems work, communities stay connected and local economies can grow. When they fall behind, rural communities feel the impact immediately.

That is why airport infrastructure matters in places like Colorado's Third District.

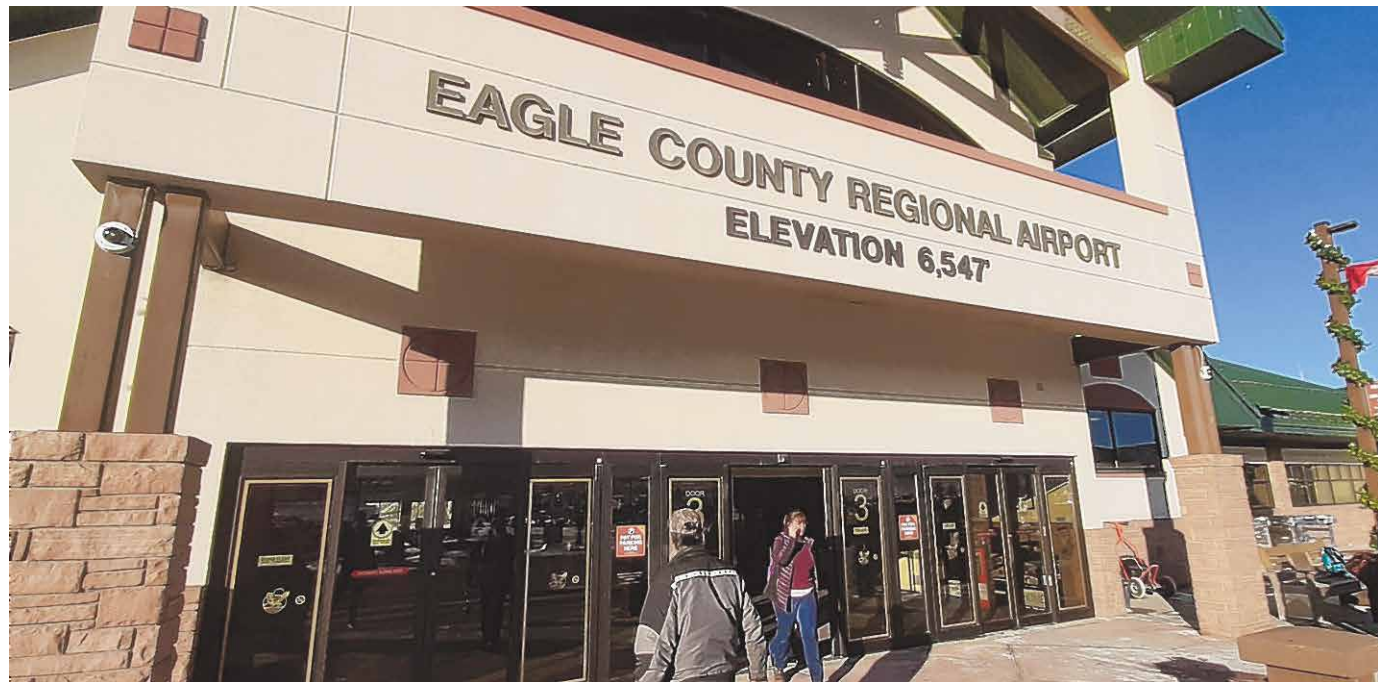
Airports across the country face nearly \$175 billion in infrastructure needs over the next five years. For rural and mid-sized communities, meeting those needs is not about luxury projects or flashy announcements. It is about maintaining reliable service, modernizing aging facilities, improving safety, and ensuring communities are not left isolated because of geography.

Federal policy should help make that possible.

One tool that has helped do that is the Transportation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act, or TIFIA. For years, TIFIA has helped finance major transportation projects through flexible, low-cost federal loans. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law temporarily expanded that financing model to airports, giving them access to a tool that had already proven successful for other transportation projects.

But that authority expired.

The problem is that airport infrastructure projects are planned years in advance. Communities cannot responsibly move forward on major upgrades when financing tools appear and disappear



Passengers arrive at Eagle County Regional Airport in Gypsum, Colorado, a regional airport serving communities across the Western Slope.

depending on the political cycle in Washington. When that certainty disappears, projects stall, costs rise, and rural communities are left waiting.

That is why I introduced the Airport TIFIA Financing Certainty Act with Rep. John Garamendi, D-Calif.

This legislation restores and strengthens a financing tool that allows airports to invest in critical infrastructure while reducing unnecessary burdens on local taxpayers.

Just as importantly, it improves how the program actually works.

Right now, too many airports face barriers that have more to do with navigating federal bureaucracy than whether a project makes sense. Lengthy review timelines, rigid financing thresholds and unnecessary procedural hurdles can delay projects even when local demand and financing are already in place.

Those delays matter.

In rural communities, when projects are delayed, costs increase. Construction timelines stretch. Opportunities are lost. And communities that are already working with limited resources fall further behind.

This legislation addresses those challenges directly by expanding eligibility for airport projects, removing barriers that keep viable projects from accessing financing and increasing the threshold for expedited review so more mid-sized projects can move forward without getting trapped in unnecessary delays.

The focus should be on whether a project is financially sound, regionally important and capable of delivering long-term value — not whether it can survive layers of bureaucracy.

In rural communities, when projects are delayed, costs increase. Construction timelines stretch. Opportunities are lost. And communities that are already working with limited resources fall further behind.

That is especially important in rural America.

In Grand Junction, that could mean expanding infrastructure to keep pace with passenger growth and economic activity. In other communities across the West, it may mean upgrading safety systems, improving reliability or modernizing facilities that communities depend on every day.

The projects may differ. The principle does not.

Infrastructure policy should be measured by results.

Too often in Washington, success is measured by how much money gets announced or how many programs are created. But communities do not experience infrastructure through press releases. They experience it through whether projects actually get completed and whether systems work when people rely on them.

We have seen the consequences when that follow-through is missing. Projects get authorized but never delivered. Funding is promised but delayed for years. Federal processes become so

complicated that communities spend more time navigating paperwork than building infrastructure.

Over time, that erodes trust.

The answer is not always creating another new federal program. Sometimes the better approach is making existing tools work the way they were intended to work in the first place.

That is what this legislation does.

The Airport TIFIA Financing Certainty Act restores a proven financing tool, improves its function, and gives airports the predictability they need to responsibly plan for the future.

For communities across Colorado's Third District, that matters.

Reliable air service supports economic development, strengthens access to health care, supports tourism, and helps ensure rural communities stay connected to the rest of the country. In a district as large and rural as ours, that connectivity is not optional.

It is essential.

And ultimately, the measure of infrastructure policy is not how many federal programs exist on paper.

It is whether the runway is safe. Whether the terminal can handle demand. Whether families, workers, and businesses can depend on reliable service.

That is the standard we should be focused on delivering.

Rep. Jeff Hurd represents Colorado's 3rd district, one of the most stunning and diverse regions in the country. He serves on three key House committees: Natural Resources, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Science, Space and Technology.

Permitting reform is key to modernizing America's transportation systems



By U.S. Rep. Nick Begich,
R-Alaska

America's economy is evolving faster than at any point in modern history. Artificial intelligence is transforming how businesses operate. Supply chains are becoming more complex and more digital. Advanced manufacturing is reshaping where and how products are made. And across every sector, the speed of innovation is accelerating.

But while our economy is moving forward at a rapid pace, too much of our transportation infrastructure is still playing catch-up. If we want to remain globally competitive, we need transportation systems that are built for the demands of the next generation of growth.

Transportation has always been foundational to American prosperity. It connects workers to jobs, businesses to markets and communities to opportunity. But the nature of mobility is changing.

Today's economy depends on real-time logistics, reliable freight movement, and seamless connectivity between regions. Delays cost time, ripple through supply chains, increase costs for families, and weaken our competitive edge.

At the same time, infrastructure demands are growing. More goods are moving. More data is flowing. New technologies, from automation to AI, are placing greater pressure on the systems that move both people and products.

Modern mobility requires modern infrastructure.

We often talk about infrastructure in terms of federal investment. But increasingly, the biggest obstacle isn't a lack of investment; it's the time it takes to get projects approved and built.

According to S&P Global, it can take nearly 29 years to bring a mine online in the United States. Transportation projects face similar challenges.



help projects move faster, reduce costs, and keep communities connected. Importantly, it demonstrates what's possible when we take a practical approach to reform.

Permitting reform is the building block that unlocks infrastructure investment and accelerates project delivery. We cannot expect to move at the speed of modern innovation while relying on outdated regulatory systems that delay projects for years and drive-up costs before construction even begins.

The challenge ahead is not maintaining what we have, it's building for America's future. That means investing in infrastructure that can handle increased freight demand, support emerging industries and connect both urban and rural communities more effectively.

It also means recognizing that transportation is not a standalone system. It is part of a broader economic framework that includes energy, technology, and workforce development. When those pieces are aligned, the results are powerful: lower costs, stronger supply chains and more opportunity for American workers and businesses.

America has always risen to lead during times of change. Today, we face another such moment.

We can continue to rely on outdated processes and infrastructure that struggle to keep pace, or we can modernize, streamline and build systems that prepare us for the future.

The path forward is clear. We need smarter policies, faster project delivery and a renewed commitment to building the infrastructure that powers American growth. In the end, transportation is the foundation of economic opportunity and the key to staying competitive in the century ahead.

If America is going to lead, we must continue to build and modernize our transportation systems, and the foundation for accomplishing that at the speed of the modern economy is permitting reform.

Rep. Nick Begich was sworn into Congress on Jan. 3, 2025. Nick's goal in Congress is to make sure Alaskans succeed. He is a member of the House Committee on Natural Resources, where he serves as vice chair of the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee.

Lengthy permitting processes, duplicative reviews, and regulatory uncertainty can stall critical transportation projects for years. That delay comes at a cost. It raises project expenses, discourages investment and prevents communities from getting the infrastructure they need.

Recent updates to federal environmental review procedures are a welcome step toward addressing these challenges. By streamlining processes and reducing unnecessary duplication, we can begin to move projects forward more efficiently.

But broader reform is still needed. Permitting reform is the building block that unlocks infrastructure investment and accelerates project delivery. We cannot expect to move at the speed of modern innovation while relying on outdated regulatory systems that delay projects for years and drive-up costs before construction even begins.

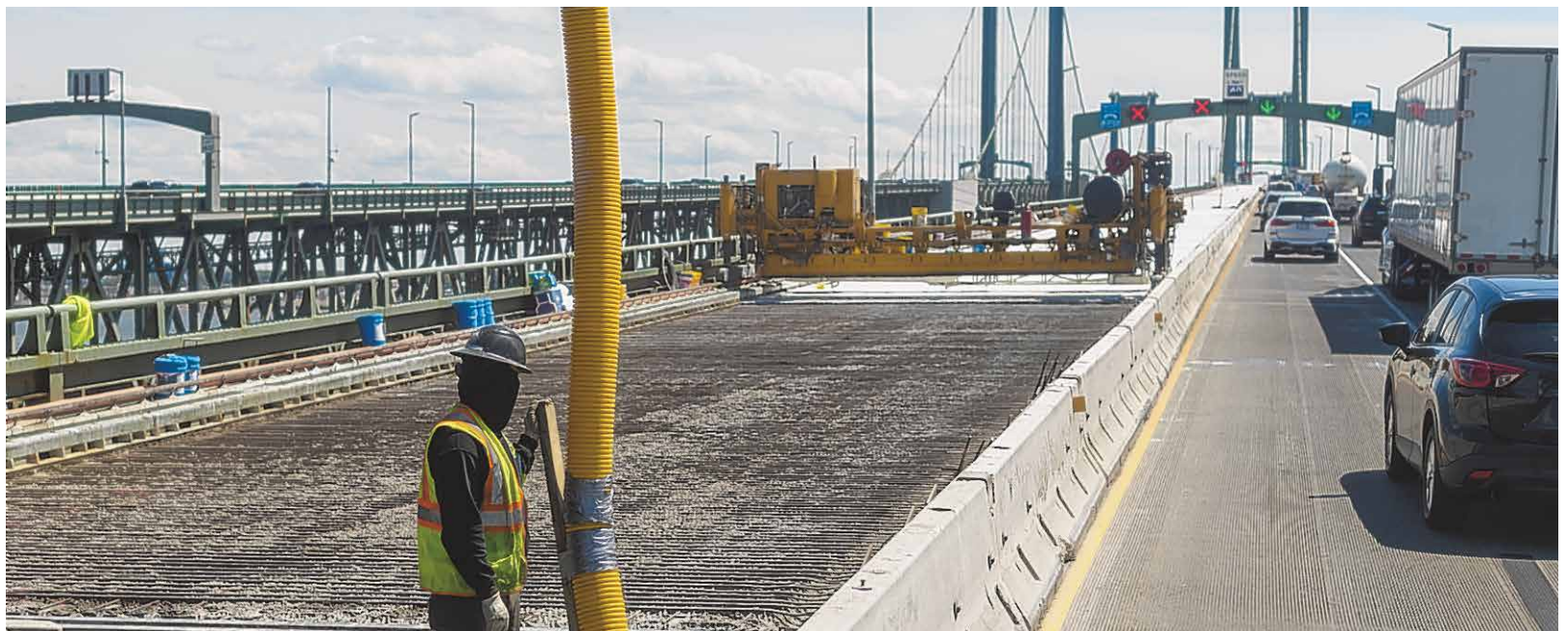
That's why I was proud to co-sponsor the SPEED Act, which focuses on improving the efficiency, transparency, and predictability of the permitting process. The goal is not to eliminate

environmental safeguards, but to ensure they function as intended without becoming indefinite barriers to progress. Passing this bipartisan legislation is paramount if America is serious about building world-class transportation and energy infrastructure.

Getting the federal government out of the way allows for more rapid innovation cycles.

Earlier this year, the House passed my Airport Regulatory Relief Act of 2025, which addresses a clear mismatch in federal requirements. In many parts of the country, small airports are essential to everyday life. They connect communities to medical care, commerce and basic services that are not otherwise accessible by a road system. But under current rules, these airports are often required to meet the same pavement standards as major international hubs. That approach increases costs and slows down critical improvements.

My legislation allows states to apply proven, cost-effective standards for certain smaller airport projects, while maintaining federal oversight to ensure safety. It's a commonsense fix that will



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Why we need a new surface transportation reauthorization bill now



By Michele Stanley

As a nation, we travel 3.3 trillion miles each year using our road and bridge infrastructure, which is also used to move a significant portion of the \$28.5 trillion worth of commodities annually shipped across the country. However, we all know firsthand the poor conditions of our infrastructure network. This is overwhelmingly due to the need for improvements outpaces the amount of funding available.

Investment into our highways and bridges is vital. America's roads, bridges and highways connect families to schools; workers to jobs; and businesses to customers. These are pillars of our strong economy.

Congress has until Sept. 30 to pass a surface transportation reauthorization bill. This legislation provides the

reliable funding to modernize roads and bridges, so Americans can safely travel, and goods and services can be efficiently delivered. Without a new multi-year bill, the impact on our infrastructure and our economy will be dramatic, as states will face sharp funding cuts and stalled modernization. This would also severely limit the ability to plan for future improvements.

A lack of investment would negatively impact Americans' daily lives and our nation's economy. Congress needs to approve long-term, flexible infrastructure legislation to enable long-term success for our country.

A lack of investment would negatively impact Americans' daily lives and our nation's economy. Congress needs to approve long-term, flexible infrastructure legislation to enable long-term success for our country.

Businesses, states and local governments need long-term funding certainty. Such large projects require capital investments to meet those needs, which are challenged with minimal or short-term funding. Long-range planning requires long-term resources. Infrastructure projects support thousands of family-sustaining jobs in the construction materials industry and generate billions of dollars in economic activity. According to the American Road & Transportation Builders Association, over \$650 billion in economic activity is generated annually from the design, construction and maintenance work of

transportation projects, which creates and supports 4.4 million jobs across the nation's economy.

To continue this momentum, Congress must act on a new surface transportation reauthorization bill this year. It must provide strong funding for core highway formula programs. Big projects take time and money, and our nation's infrastructure is no different. These

resources give states the stable, multi-year certainty needed to efficiently plan and complete their own highway and bridge projects.

The surface transportation reauthorization bill must also stabilize the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). The HTF, backed by user fees, is the lifeblood of America's surface transportation network. Unfortunately, this fund faces a projected shortfall without congressional action.

Everyone who uses our roads should contribute to keeping them maintained. Each fill-up at a gas station provides money to the HTF, though the federal gas tax rate of \$0.184 per gallon was set over 30 years ago. Currently, electric vehicles skirt this user fee.

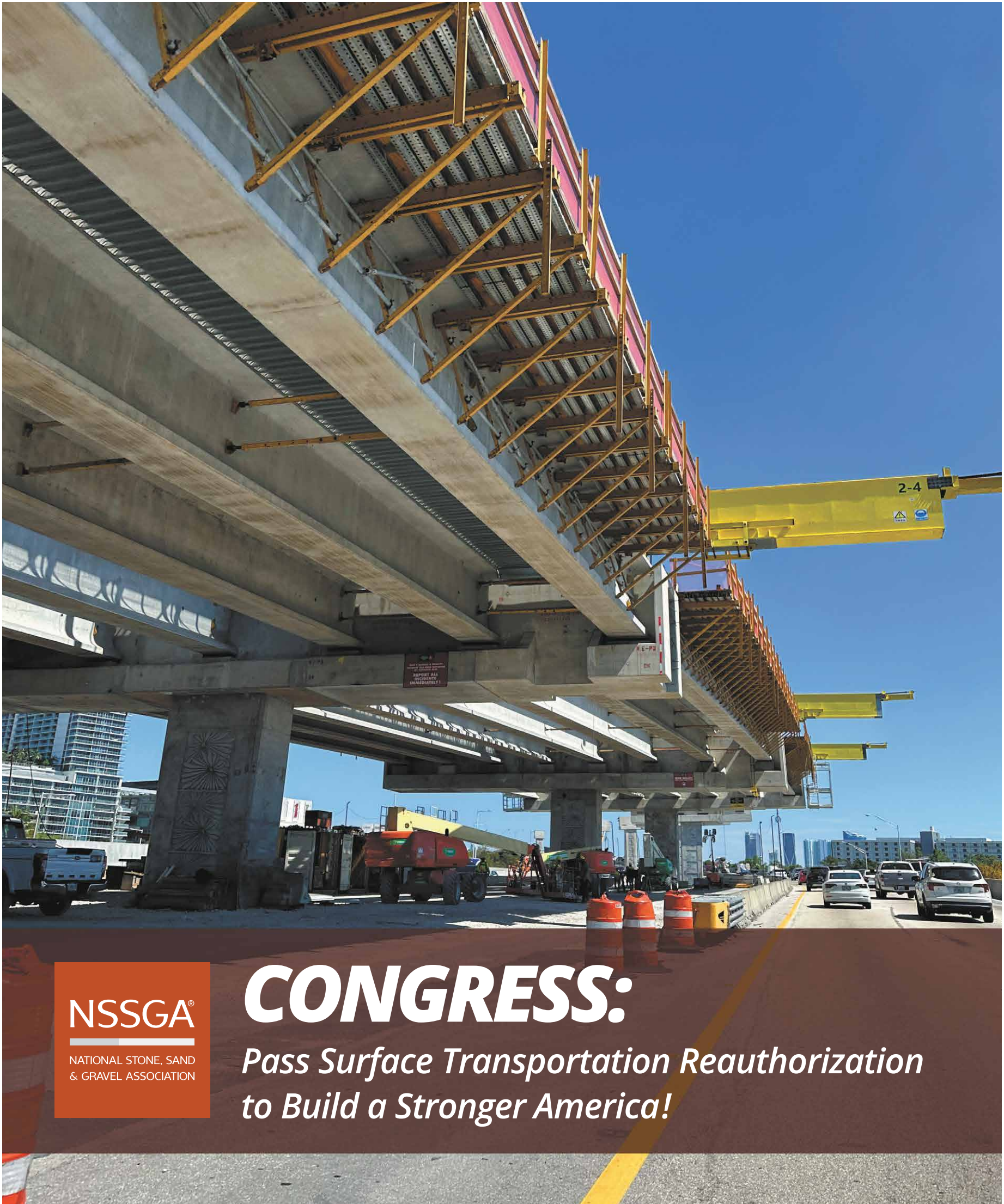
A strong, solvent HTF means safer roads, stronger bridges, and the ability for aggregates producers, like National

Stone, Sand & Gravel Association (NSSGA) members, to keep building the infrastructure America relies on every day. As Congress moves toward reauthorization, everyone that uses our roads should pay for them.

NSSGA members proudly play a critical role in building and modernizing our infrastructure sector by providing the aggregates materials of crushed stone, sand and gravel. These materials create all residential, commercial, and industrial projects. NSSGA members employ more than 105,000 people with high-paying jobs, and our industry supports nearly six jobs across the U.S. economy for every one job we employ.

Sept. 30 is rapidly approaching. Congress must meet this critical moment in history by passing multi-year, predictable funding to improve our infrastructure and grow our economy. We cannot afford for time to run out, as every American depends on safe, maintained roads, bridges and public works projects. America should be a global leader on infrastructure, and that can only happen if Congress fulfills its obligation to provide a meaningful, on-time surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Michele Stanley is President & CEO of the National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association, the leading advocate for the aggregates industry. Its members – stone, sand and gravel producers and the equipment manufacturers and service providers who support them – produce the essential raw materials found in homes, buildings, roads, bridges and public works projects.



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CONGRESS:

*Pass Surface Transportation Reauthorization
to Build a Stronger America!*

Spaceports, space access: Leadership in space begins on the ground



By U.S. Rep. Dale Strong, R-Ala.

As China and other adversaries rapidly expand their space capabilities, the United States cannot afford to fall behind.

Space is a strategic domain critical to our national security, economy, and way of life. From communications and navigation to weather forecasting and defense, space has evolved from the great unknown into an indispensable part of our daily lives and remains the next frontier where the United States must continue to lead.

When the nation witnesses space exploration in action, it is often the white trails of a rocket launch in the distance or through a screen at home. What we don't often see is the behind-the-scenes coordination, integration and infrastructure that get rockets off the ground and safely return their payloads to Earth.

Spaceports play a critical part in the "behind-the-scenes" work, supporting the full lifecycle of space-based missions and operations, from launch and landing to payload integration, testing, refurbishment and reuse. They are complex, highly coordinated facilities that require a skilled workforce, advanced safety and emergency-response capabilities, integration with the national airspace and resilient infrastructure designed for frequent operations.

The spaceports of the future must function like major transportation centers, capable of supporting multiple providers, sustaining an increased mission cadence and meeting national security, civil, and commercial needs.

The growing number of commercial launch providers is beginning to outpace the capacity of existing federal and non-federal launch infrastructure. Demand is increasing, but the number of capable, modernized sites has not kept up. The



NASA's Artemis II moon rocket lifts off from Launch Pad 39B at Kennedy Space Center on April 1, 2026, in Cape Canaveral, Florida.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

result is a system that is increasingly congested, fragmented, and difficult to scale. This is not just a problem for our economy; it also puts our national security at risk.

As our adversaries expand their own launch capabilities, access to space is becoming a defining strategic advantage. If we cannot launch when and where we need to, we risk ceding leadership in a domain that underpins both military readiness and economic competitiveness.

If the United States is going to launch more frequently, we need more sites across the country capable of supporting launch and reentry operations. That means modern, capable spaceports.

To help meet that need, I introduced the Spaceport Project Opportunities for Resilient Transportation (SPACEPORT) Act, which would accelerate the development and modernization of spaceports nationwide, improve coordination among federal agencies and ensure communities have the resources to support increased launch and reentry activities.

It would also help reinvigorate efforts like the Space Transportation Infrastructure Matching Grant program, supporting facility upgrades and capability expansions to meet the rapidly growing demands of the space industry.

When we increase the number of

If we cannot launch when and where we need to, we risk ceding leadership in a domain that underpins both military readiness and economic competitiveness.

viable launch and reentry sites, we do more than expand launch access. We foster competition, drive down costs, and improve resilience across the entire space enterprise. More launch capacity also means faster timelines, greater flexibility and stronger support for NASA, the Department of War and our commercial partners.

Spaceport development is already well underway in the Rocket City, where our community is building out the infrastructure that makes space missions possible.

The Port of Huntsville stands as one of the most advanced multimodal hubs in the country, connecting air, rail and highway systems into a single, efficient network. Huntsville International Airport has the second-longest runway in the Southeast, spanning more than 8,000 acres, giving it the capacity to support

both passenger travel and high-volume cargo operations critical to the space supply chain.

It's also leading the next phase of space transportation. The Huntsville International Airport was the first commercial airport licensed by the Federal Aviation Administration to serve as a reentry site for space vehicles, positioning North Alabama at the forefront of integrating space operations with traditional transportation infrastructure.

North Alabama is what the future of space access looks like: integrated, scalable and built for sustained operations.

America's leadership in space has never been accidental. It has been built through deliberate investment, sustained commitment, and the strength of communities, like Huntsville, that deliver results.

That leadership is not guaranteed, but it is ours to maintain. The Rocket City stands ready to continue leading the way.

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Rep. Dale W. Strong represents the Fifth District of Alabama. He serves as Vice Chairman of the Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations Subcommittee and is a member of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee.

Build the American dream by restoring permitting accountability



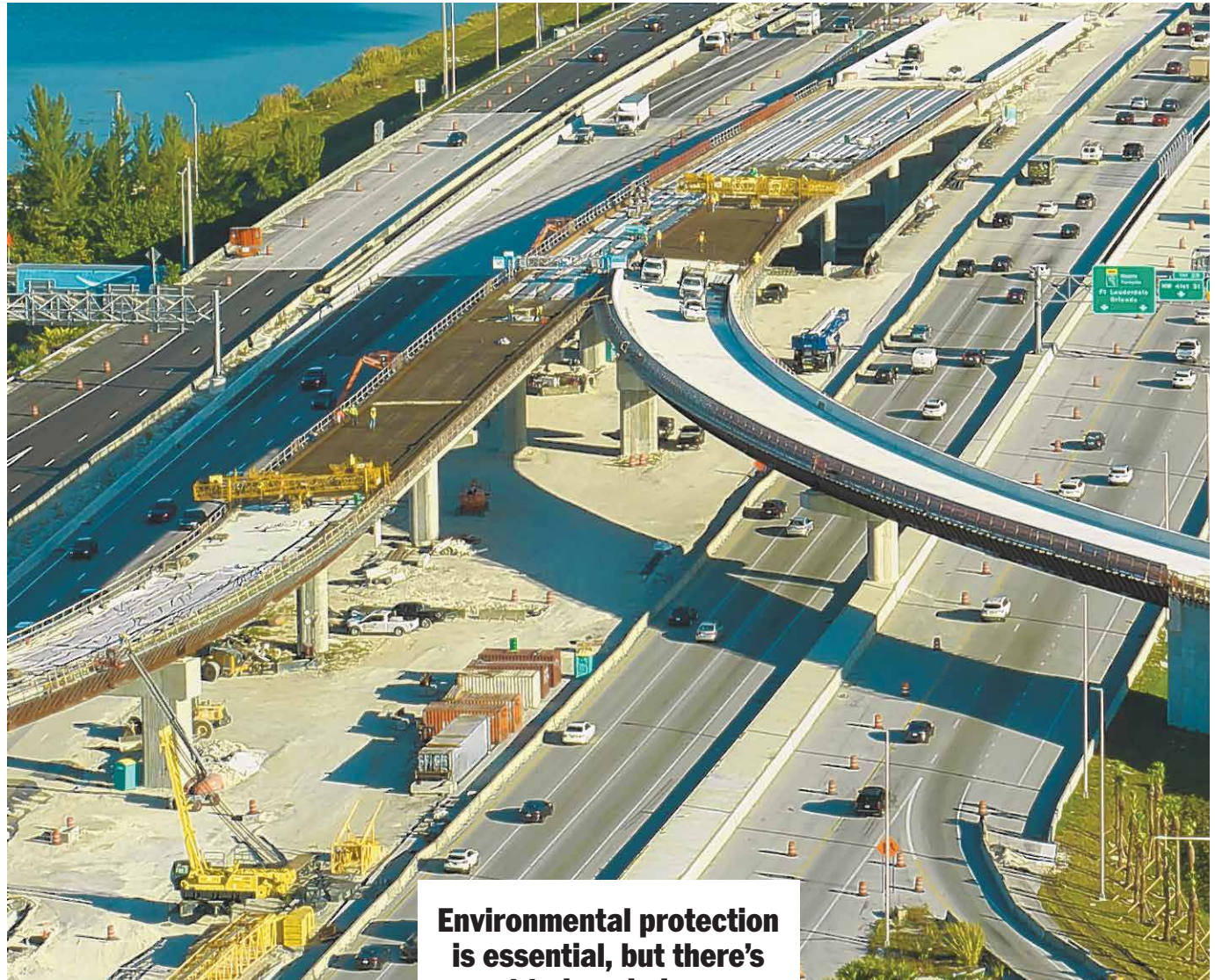
By U.S. Rep. Jimmy Patronis, R-Fla.

Building has always been at the heart of the American Dream, not just as an economic driver, but as the way communities take shape, families put down roots, and opportunity is passed from one generation to the next.

Roads, schools, housing, and infrastructure are more than projects on paper; they're the foundation of daily life and the promise of progress made real.

Yet too often, that promise runs into a frustrating reality. Washington often preaches the importance of investing in infrastructure and revitalizing communities, but when projects move from concept to construction, the government throws a bunch of red tape and delay at people who are spending their own money to try and make a dream happen.

In many cases, especially in a state like Florida with its sensitive environment, projects require permits from both the federal government and the state to ensure they are built responsibly and with strong environmental protections in place. Historically, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection has played a key role in that process, helping administer "404 Permits" on behalf of the federal government. That partnership has allowed projects to move forward efficiently while still safeguarding Florida's natural treasures. In 2024, however, a single federal judge took that authority from Florida, which caused projects like schools and fire houses to restart the entire process. And this may not surprise anyone: the federal government is very slow and often bad at what it does. This suit, by the way, was brought on behalf of environmental crazies who want it all shut down – the kind of people who want mankind back in the caves so the butterflies and the



Environmental protection is essential, but there's got to be a balance. When the regulations become so complex that it delays housing, schools, public safety, and basic infrastructure, the system is no longer working as intended.

bears can dance to whimsical music in the forests like one of those movies where everyone breaks out into song and dance. Total fiction.

Environmental protection is essential, but there's got to be a balance. When the regulations become so complex that it delays housing, schools, public safety, and basic infrastructure, the system is no longer working as intended. Florida has shown there is a better way by doing the federal permitting on the state level. This approach allows projects to move forward more quickly, with greater predictability, and often at lower cost – after all, time is money. The result is more housing for families, faster construction of essential public facilities, and stronger confidence in future investments.

That's why I worked to include essential provisions in the PERMIT Act, a commonsense effort to restore clarity and accountability to the permitting process by setting reasonable timelines, reducing unnecessary delays and improving consistency in how projects are reviewed.

Right now, too many projects are slowed by overlapping requirements, unclear expectations, and prolonged litigation that can stretch for years. This legislation addresses that breakdown without weakening environmental protections. Reviews remain rigorous, but they are guided by clear timelines and defined expectations so they cannot drift indefinitely or trap projects in limbo.

Because the Democratic party is so beholden to the environmental crazies, agencies were essentially weaponized to shutdown projects through bureaucratic malaise. President Donald

Trump, however, who knows how to build things, has made it clear that America needs more roads, more housing, more of everything, to meet the needs of our country.

At its core, the PERMIT Act is about restoring balance to how we build in this country. Our country has always been a nation of builders and problem-solvers, capable of turning shared priorities into lasting progress. But that tradition weakens when outdated processes slow action to a crawl. It is time to cut the red tape, trust our states, and make it possible to build again with clarity and purpose. Because when building stalls, communities wait, and the future does too.

Jimmy Patronis Jr. proudly represents Florida's 1st District in the Panhandle. A fourth-generation Floridian and man of faith, he's a strong advocate for the Second Amendment, veterans and first responders. He's a member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

Railroad merger will streamline freight, power America's economy and create jobs

By Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern

On April 30, our companies, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern, submitted an amended application to the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to merge our two railroads and create America's first transcontinental railroad. We call it The Great Connection for the following reasons.

A coast-to-coast breakthrough: The Great Connection will create the first unified, transcontinental rail network in the United States, eliminating costly handoffs and giving shippers a single, seamless partner from coast to coast.

Faster, safer, more reliable service: By reducing interchange points and improving network integration, the combination will cut transit times, strengthen supply chain visibility and reduce opportunities for cargo theft and disruption.

Stronger competition, lower costs: With virtually no route overlap, this end-to-end combination enhances competition across the broader freight market, putting downward pressure on rates while delivering better service for customers.

Economic and environmental gains: The network is expected to shift millions of truckloads to rail annually, easing highway congestion, lowering emissions and delivering billions in cost savings to American businesses.

Jobs protected: Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern have committed to a guaranteed "Jobs for Life" pledge for every union employee at the time of the merger, regardless of economic conditions. It is an unprecedented agreement already formalized with multiple labor unions and designed to protect railroad families while supporting long-term growth.

The combined network will span 50,000 route miles across 43 states with access to more than 100 ports and 10 international gateways into Canada and Mexico. Six connection points will tie our two systems together, with virtually no route overlap, thus eliminating costly interchanges and enabling freight to take a more direct path towards its cross-country destination.

Today, freight moving coast to coast typically gets handed off from a western railroad to an eastern one somewhere in the middle of the country. That handoff adds time and cost. One analysis found that shipments requiring handoffs between rail operators cost 34% more on average for merchandise moving 1,000



Shippers stand to save an estimated \$3.5 billion a year by moving more long-haul freight by rail, since railroads offer competitive per-mile rates and are less susceptible to fuel cost fluctuations.

to 1,500 miles than comparable single-line service.

The lack of interoperability makes it difficult for shippers to track locations, delivery dates and disruptions, especially for long-distance shipments that require multiple transfers.

"By uniting these rail networks, Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern are taking a logical step to improve agricultural logistics," KC Graner, president and CEO of Central Farm Service, said. "We expect to see faster shipments, fewer delays, and better rail access ... This merger will strengthen the farm supply chain and help us serve our growers even better."

The Union Pacific-Norfolk Southern combination is expected to shift 2.1 million truckloads from road to rail each year, according to an analysis from leading industry advisor Oliver Wyman. That means less highway congestion, less wear on publicly funded roads and bridges and nearly 3.8 million fewer metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions a year when fully implemented.

Shippers stand to save an estimated \$3.5 billion a year by moving more long-haul freight by rail, since railroads offer competitive per-mile rates and are less susceptible to fuel cost fluctuations.

"This merger will enhance competition in the marketplace," Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena said. "That competition will spur innovation and help lower costs — benefits that shippers and American consumers will feel directly." "Our merger will create strong

growth by providing customers a superior service product, which in itself creates competition in the railroad industry," Norfolk Southern President and CEO Mark George said. "The announcement of our merger alone has caused other railroads to respond with new offerings."

The combination will also create jobs. Our latest analysis — the first in rail merger history to use 100% actual traffic data provided by all six North American Class I railroads — estimates that the merger will create 1,200 net new union jobs by Year 3.

We have guaranteed "Jobs for Life" to every union employee working for Union Pacific or Norfolk Southern at the time of the combination, regardless of economic conditions. That pledge has been formalized with six railroad unions, including the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers-Transportation Division (SMART-TD), the industry's largest.

"This is a proud day for our members," SMART-TD President Jeremy R. Ferguson said when the agreement was announced. "For generations, railroaders

have worried about what mergers might mean for their jobs. Today, the biggest railroad and the biggest rail union in America are breaking new ground. We are protecting jobs, protecting families, and protecting the future of the U.S. supply chain."

The case has resonated. More than 2,000 businesses, unions, farmers and community leaders have written to the STB in support, over 700 of them commercial partners.

"As a company that operates thousands of trucks and thousands of intermodal containers, we know the power of combining modes," Knight-Swift Transportation CEO Adam Miller said. "This unified rail system will let us seamlessly integrate our trucking with rail on cross-country shipments like never before. The result will be faster deliveries, and lower fuel usage, which is great news for American businesses."

Our amended filing addresses key issues raised by the STB in response to the initial application. The agency is expected to decide whether the revised application will be accepted by the end of May.

We expect to close the combination in the first half of 2027. America has waited a long time for a transcontinental railroad. The Great Connection will finally deliver one.

We encourage readers and others who want to know more to visit our website, AmericasGreatConnection.com, or read the facts included in the STB filing yourself.

THE *Great* CONNECTION

One seamless network.
DELIVERING
for **AMERICA.**

Creating measurable benefits for shippers, employees, farmers, consumers and the American economy.



Shippers:

\$3.5 BILLION saved annually by shippers.



Economy:

STRONGER supply chains. More **RESILIENT** American economy.



Employees:

Union employees at the time of the merger have a job.
FOR LIFE.



Farmers:

Expanded access to **NEW MARKETS:** East Coast, West Coast, Great Lakes and Gulf Coast.



Taxpayers:

Moving freight by rail **REDUCES** congestion on taxpayer-funded roads.



Environment:

3.8 MILLION metric tons of emissions eliminated annually.



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Driving growth on US highways

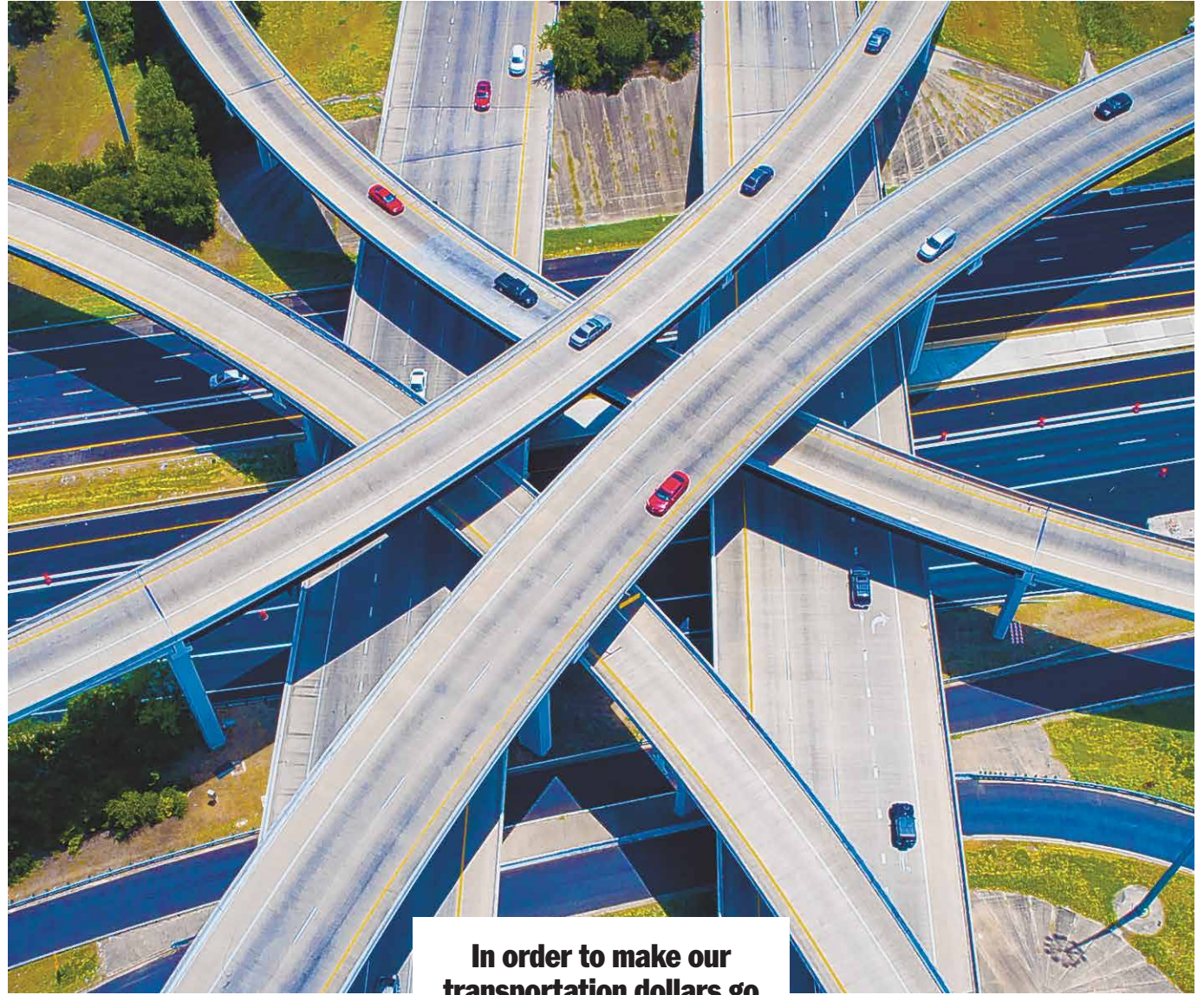


By U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson,
R-S.D.

Supply chains keep our economy moving. In fact, surface transportation like trucking and rail move 73% of all goods in the United States. Ensuring our roads, railroads and bridges are in strong condition is key to making sure products make it the last mile of their delivery. Despite the importance of surface transportation, America is short 60,000 truck drivers, and demand for goods only increases.

As a member of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I'm working on ways to ensure deliveries make it to their final destination in an efficient manner. One way we can improve efficiency is by increasing the amount of weight a truck can transport. It has been 44 years since Congress updated its gross vehicle weight limits – and a lot of things have changed since 1982. By increasing the limit from 80,000 pounds to 91,000 pounds across six axles instead of five, damage to roads will decrease and so will trucks' braking distance. Since studies show we can do it safely, we should give it a test drive. We'll get more goods delivered on time, reduce damage on roads, make our highways safer and drive growth in our economy.

Another way we can improve efficiency in our transportation system is by ensuring federal funds end up in the right place for the right purpose. That's why I introduced the No Department of Transportation (DOT) Funds for Sanctuary Cities Act to prohibit federal funds from going to cities that don't comply with federal law enforcement. In recent years, we've seen protestors and rioters destroying transportation infrastructure in sanctuary cities like Los Angeles. Sanctuary cities use federal dollars to maintain their infrastructure that they allow anti-ICE protestors to damage, then use more federal dollars on the repairs. If



In order to make our transportation dollars go further, Congress should allow states to prioritize projects they need the most ... States and localities know what projects are the most critical, not unelected bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.

sanctuary cities want help maintaining their roads and bridges, they need to play by the rules and work with federal law enforcement. It's Congress' role to ensure federal funds are being used in an appropriate, productive manner.

In order to make our transportation dollars go further, Congress should allow states to prioritize projects they need the most. Many states, like my own, had millions of dollars left over from President Joe Biden's infrastructure funding that heavily prioritized electric vehicles (EV). America lacks the infrastructure for charging and implementing a full switch to EVs, especially in South Dakota, where driving distances are long and temperatures are often too cold. Unfortunately, the infrastructure funds from the Biden administration can only be used for EV projects. I introduced legislation to allow states to decide how to use these dollars to meet their needs. States and localities know what projects are the most critical, not unelected bureaucrats in Washington, D.C.

But investments in America's infrastructure aren't as meaningful if we do not protect these assets from foreign

adversaries. I've led the charge to ban the Department of Transportation from using LiDAR from foreign adversaries. Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) technology creates 3-D maps with millimeter-level data of surrounding environments. It is widely employed in our nation's transit infrastructure, including in airports, railways, autonomous vehicles, ports and traffic control systems. Allowing our adversaries like China to have access to these maps of critical infrastructure could allow them to disrupt our supply chains and cause a national security crisis. My bill ensures our nation's critical infrastructure is

protected from the malign interests of the Chinese Communist Party.

Here's the bottom line – American infrastructure is lagging behind our competitors, especially China. Our roads are filled with potholes; bridges need to be rebuilt; and our supply chain could use a boost. It's time to set aside political and climate agendas and let the free market work. Increasing shipping capacity, protecting federal dollars and revitalizing our highways must be a priority to maintain an edge on the global stage.

Rep. Dusty Johnson brings an energetic and optimistic style to Washington as South Dakota's lone voice in the U.S. House of Representatives. He is a recognized leader in issues related to rural America, agriculture, supply chains, rural broadband, and our strategic competition with China. He serves on the Select Committee on China, Agriculture Committee, and Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Prior to being elected to Congress, he served as chief of staff to the Governor and as vice president of an engineering firm specializing in rural telecommunications.

Restoring reliability, safety and confidence to American air travel



By U.S. Rep. Stephanie Bice, R-Okla.

Not long ago, flying in the United States symbolized efficiency, civility, and confidence in a system that works. Today, delays, Democratic-driven shutdowns, close calls and ongoing disruptions have chipped away at the system, making flying more of a hassle and even concerning for some consumers. However, a concerted effort is being led to restore what many remember as the golden era of American air travel. Under the leadership of President Donald Trump, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford, we are focused on restoring not only the flight experience, but reliability and safety as well.

Safety in aviation starts with two key factors: hiring new air traffic controllers and investing in modern air traffic control systems. President Trump inherited an aging system, created in the 1950's-70's which more resembles the original Macintosh than it does today's modern computing systems. This new system, the Brand New Air Traffic Control System (BNATCS), will significantly change the industry, using additional technology to assist traditional radar tracking systems. It will unlock potential, utilize modern computing and AI to save time and resources. Not only will this new system make it safer to fly, but it should also help prevent costly delays negatively impacting travel in all major airports. By making the travel system timely, the Trump administration is making the overall air travel experience more pleasurable.

Replacing current air traffic control systems is a major undertaking, but it is necessary to meet the demands of modern travel. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is working to overhaul core



of more modern fiber wires. This is not dangerous and not sustainable.

All of this is concerning. But thankfully, the Trump administration is taking action, rather than ignoring the problem.

By making the travel system timely, the Trump administration is making the overall air travel experience more pleasurable.

Another prong of making air travel great again is recruiting new air traffic controllers. As an Oklahoman, I am incredibly proud of the work being done at the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center (MMAC), which is training the next generation of ATCs. The FAA recently surpassed its fiscal year 2025 hiring goal, bringing on more than 2,000 new controllers, and it is important we continue recruiting and training year after year to keep pace with growing demand and ensure long term safety.

Recently, I had the incredible honor of hosting FAA Administrator Bedford at MMAC. His visit was the first by an FAA administrator in over a decade, showcasing the focus this administration has on supporting this crucial institution. While on the tour we witnessed the incredible work happening daily in Oklahoma City, where hard-working individuals are streamlining logistical procedures and repairs, ultimately saving taxpayer dollars. The center also utilizes new innovative technologies and systems, funded by the One Big Beautiful Bill, to help prepare the next generation of aviation professionals.

Together, these efforts represent a long-term investment in restoring confidence in American aviation. By modernizing infrastructure and strengthening the workforce, we are taking meaningful steps toward making air travel safer, more efficient, and more reliable for passengers across the country.

Rep. Stephanie Bice is a fourth-generation Oklahoman currently serving as the U.S. Representative for Oklahoma's 5th Congressional District. She serves on the Appropriations Committee, where she was named Vice Chair of the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Subcommittee. Additionally, she is the Chairwoman of the Subcommittee on Modernization and Innovation within the Committee on House Administration. Bice was also named to a seat on the United States Military Academy at West Point Board of Visitors.

infrastructure, including radar, software, hardware and telecommunications networks. To meet the goal of implementing a brand-new system by 2028, the Department of Transportation and FAA have expedited the procurement process and introduced a first-of-its-kind contract that incentivizes results and holds contractors accountable for missed deadlines and performance issues.

This modernization effort is built around several key areas, including communication systems that allow FAA to share information between air traffic control facilities and pilots, surveillance systems that track aircraft in the sky and on the ground and automation tools that help controllers manage traffic safety and efficiency. It also includes upgrades to physical facilities and targeted investments in regions like Alaska, where additional infrastructure is needed to improve aviation safety.

The scale of these upgrades reflects

the urgency of the problem. Plans include installing more than 27,000 new radios, over 5,000 high-speed network connections across fiber, satellite and wireless systems, and more than 600 modern radars. The system will also include over 400 new digital voice switches, additional weather stations and the construction of the first new Air Route Traffic Control Center since the 1960s.

However, it is not only the radar which needs modernization, but also the communications system. The incident at Newark Liberty International Airport in 2025, in which communications suddenly went down, highlighted this vulnerability. In many ATC towers, copper wires are still used in our communications relays. Transportation Secretary Duffy admitted that the system for managing air traffic at Newark is "incredibly old" and "frail," relying on floppy disks and copper wires instead



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It's time to get aviation out of the 1950s



By U.S. Rep. Brad Knott, R-N.C.

Modernizing aviation is both essential and necessary. Americans rely on air travel to keep our economy moving with roughly 2.6 to 2.9 million daily passengers in the United States alone. But behind the scenes of this ecosystem, too much of our aviation industry is stuck in the past.

In Congress, one of my top priorities is cutting needless red tape that makes everything in government and the private sector slower, more expensive and less safe for the American people.

Strangling bureaucracy affects the aviation industry and the safety we rely on that makes America the gold standard for innovation and safety. My bill, the Aviation Supply Chain Safety and Security Digitization Act, identifies a clear problem, offers a sensible solution and received strong bipartisan support when it passed out of the House.

What I'm offering is an industry-driven step towards modernizing FAA

In addition to the practical inefficiencies, the current system allows nefarious actors relatively easy access to our aviation supply chains. Just recently, the FAA alerted European airlines to possible counterfeit safety documentation; it was discovered that 126 airplane engines were found to have fraudulent parts. This should never happen, but instances just like this are enabled by the system currently in place.

When companies operating at the cutting edge of technology are forced to rely on recordkeeping methods that belong to another era, that stubborn bureaucracy continuously inhibits efficiency and weakens the entire process.

safety documentation for airplane parts. Currently, the FAA still relies heavily on paper record-keeping systems that are akin to those used in the 1950s – an absurdity. Not only is this approach severely outdated, it also creates real risks for the aviation industry and consumers.

Imagine if the use of email was suddenly prohibited and the use of old-fashioned, stamped envelopes became mandatory and exclusive. Our communications would grind to a halt. That analogy, on a smaller scale, is exactly the problem in the aviation industry.

The FAA rightly maintains rigorous safety standards because failure at any point could have catastrophic consequences. However, when companies operating at the cutting edge of technology are forced to rely on record-keeping methods that belong to another era, that stubborn bureaucracy continuously inhibits efficiency and weakens the entire process.

A system that requires paper documentation is too easily exploited. With millions of Americans flying every day, the impact and the urgency of getting

this right is significant. My bill is a step toward a safer and more efficient aviation supply chain. Digital certificates will be easier to track and harder to counterfeit.

At the end of the day, how we regulate matters just as much as what we regulate. We need smarter systems. If we want to reduce costs, we need to eliminate outdated processes. And if we want to stay competitive, we need to embrace innovation instead of resisting it.

Unfortunately, right now it takes an act of Congress to update this important system. So that is what I am offering. The House has done its job by passing the Aviation Supply Chain Safety and Security Digitization Act. Now, the Senate needs to act and send this bipartisan bill to President Donald Trump's desk. This is the kind of straightforward, effective reform that should move quickly. The longer we wait, the longer we allow outdated systems to hold back an industry that is essential to our way of life.

We are not living in the 1950s. It is time for our aviation system to catch up to the century we are actually in.

Rep. Brad Knott represents North Carolina's 13th Congressional District. He serves on the House Judiciary, Transportation & Infrastructure, Homeland Security, and Ethics committees.

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Standing firmly in support of our law enforcement



By U.S. Rep. Juan Ciscomani, R-Ariz.

Adam Buckner shook our entire community because it was not just a loss for law enforcement, it was a loss for all of Tucson. His sacrifice is a solemn reminder of the risks our officers face every day in service to others.

The daily grind of law enforcement is often overlooked until a crisis brings it into sharp focus. Yet behind every emergency call is a real human story: a person in need, a family in distress and an officer willing to step into the

officers and the people they protect. We must continue advocating for comprehensive support that addresses the evolving challenges law enforcement faces in a rapidly changing world.

As new technologies emerge and threats evolve, so too must our approach to keeping Tucson safe. As Arizona's sole appropriator in Congress, I take seriously the responsibility to advocate for resources that directly support our communities. For years, the Tucson Police

This is especially true in bustling hubs like the University of Arizona, where calls for help are constant and urgent. In these fast-paced environments, reliable equipment is not a luxury; it is a necessity. Modernizing our police fleet means less downtime, fewer repairs, and, most importantly, a police force that can respond swiftly and effectively to those in need.

At its core, this is about standing shoulder to shoulder with the men and women who wake up and put on the uniform every day. It is about translating our grief for Officer Buckner into real, lasting change. And it is about guaranteeing that every Tucson family, student, and neighbor can count on a robust, responsive public safety presence today and tomorrow.

The fabric of our community is tested not just by adversity, but by how we respond with resilience, unity, and resolve. Officer Buckner's legacy endures in every act of service and every step we take to strengthen the bonds that hold Tucson together.

We need to stand firmly behind the people who stand on the frontlines. Back in Washington, I'll keep doing everything I can to make sure they have the resources they deserve.

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In 2022, Rep. Juan Ciscomani was elected to represent Arizona's 6th congressional district, becoming the first naturalized American citizen from Mexico elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in Arizona history. In Congress, Rep. Ciscomani serves on both the House Appropriations Committee and the House Veterans' Affairs Committee.

The daily grind of law enforcement is often overlooked until a crisis brings it into sharp focus. Yet behind every emergency call is a real human story: a person in need, a family in distress and an officer willing to step into the unknown.

Public safety is the foundation of a strong community. It is what allows families to feel safe in their neighborhoods, businesses to grow, and children to thrive.

Every single day, the men and women in uniform put themselves in harm's way to protect our communities and answer the call when people need help most. Their service and sacrifice should never be taken for granted.

Law enforcement is who keeps our community safe and they need our support. Our congressional district is strongest when neighbors look out for one another, when communities come together in times of hardship and when we support the officers who work tirelessly to keep us safe. The tragic loss of Tucson Police Department Officer

unknown. The impact of losing an officer like Officer Buckner cannot be overstated; it is a loss carried not only by his colleagues and loved ones but by the entire community he served.

The heartbreaking loss of Officer Adam Buckner is a stark reminder of the profound risks our officers shoulder, not just in Southern Arizona, but nationwide. His sacrifice compels us, as a community and a nation, to acknowledge our duty: ensuring those who safeguard our streets have the tools, training, and support they need to return home safely at the end of each shift.

Let us also remember that public safety infrastructure extends beyond cars and equipment. It encompasses ongoing training and mental health resources that foster trust and collaboration between

Department has been forced to stretch its vehicle fleet far beyond standard replacement timelines. Many vehicles have exceeded 200,000 miles, thus creating increased maintenance demands and limiting reliability at critical moments when every second matters.

In Congress, I fought to secure \$4.2 million in federal Community Project Funding to modernize Tucson's police fleet. This targeted investment will replace aging vehicles with updated, reliable equipment, including patrol SUVs and motorcycles, community service vehicles and a mobile command unit. These upgrades were considered and advocated to achieve faster response times and maintain readiness across the entire Police Department.

With growth comes new challenges.



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Threat Status

The world is a pretty scary place. We'll help you navigate the hazards at home – and over the horizon.

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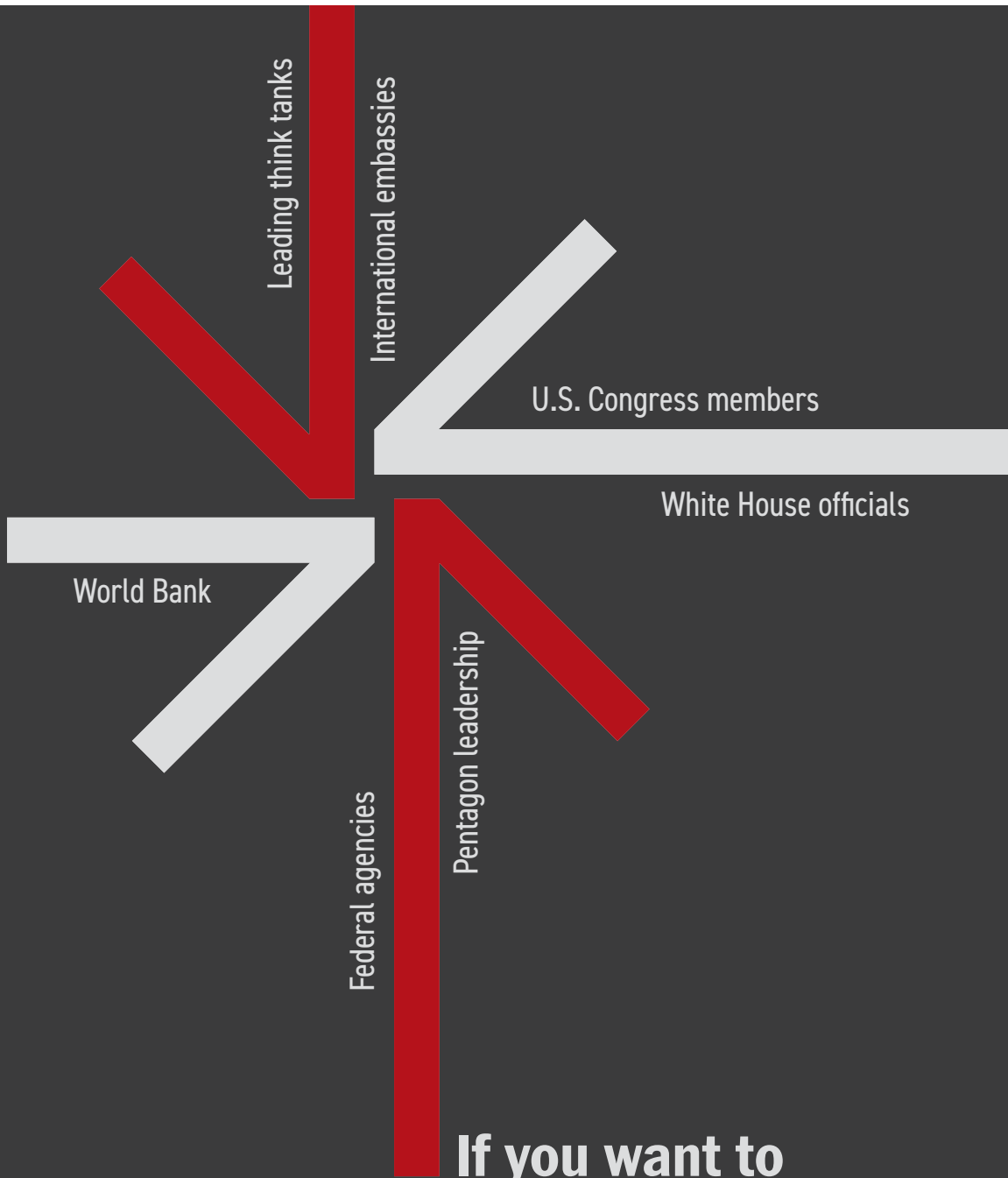
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