



2009-2010

**National
Air Traffic Controllers Association**

CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE

*For Candidates for the U.S. Senate
and the U.S. House of Representatives*



National Air Traffic Controllers Association
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National Air Traffic Controllers Association, AFL-CIO

America's air traffic control system handles more than half of the world's air traffic and cargo. The men and women who make up the air traffic control workforce serve as the lynchpin of this system, ensuring the safety of nearly 750 million aviation passengers per year. The National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), a direct affiliate of the AFL-CIO, represents air traffic controllers, engineers, and other aviation safety professionals. Our membership is composed almost entirely of federal employees and can be found in every state and territory of the United States.

NATCA is very proud to represent not only the interests of our membership, but also the safety interests of the flying public. Our motto, Safety Above All, is the litmus test against which all our decisions are based. We continually strive to improve and enhance aviation safety, and we provide the safest air traffic control system in the world.

Please complete and return the candidate questionnaire to your local NATCA representative. If a representative is not available, please fax the questionnaire to:

Jose L. Ceballos
Director of Government Affairs
NATCA
1325 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20005
Phone: 202-628-5451
Fax: 202-628-5767

You can email the questionnaire to your local NATCA representative or to Elizabeth Weaver at eweaver@natcadc.org.

Candidate Information:

Name: _____ State: _____ District: _____

Address: _____

Phone: () - _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Summary of Issues Facing NATCA's Membership

The federal government and its employees, including the workers represented by NATCA, run the world's safest and most sophisticated air traffic control system moving more than half of the world's airline traffic.

Right to Collective Bargaining

In 2005 the FAA abandoned its collective bargaining obligation and imposed work and pay rules on multiple bargaining units including Operational Support, System Standards, and Aviation Medicine, among others. In 2006 the FAA imposed work and pay rules on their largest group of employees, the air traffic controller workforce. Nearly three years later, through the efforts of President Obama's Administration and Congress, NATCA and the FAA were able to return to the bargaining table and reach a mutually acceptable collective bargaining agreement for air traffic controllers. NATCA encourages Congress to amend Title 49 of the U.S. Code to provide a fair collective bargaining and impasse resolution process for the FAA, thereby ensuring that Congress will not find itself caught in the middle of future labor disputes involving the FAA.

Proper Staffing & Training

Unfortunately, the system is still suffering from effects of the imposed work rules, including understaffing, fatigue, and a backlog in training. The FAA continues to ignore the reality of the staffing crises, hiding behind staffing standards and concealing the number of trainees in the system. NATCA believes that staffing standards should be scientifically based, and that the FAA must work together with NATCA and an impartial third party to develop staffing standards and reasonable trainee ratios for each air traffic control facility. Additionally, NATCA believes that the FAA should be open and forthright with stakeholders about the number and success rate of trainees in the system.

Modernization and Collaboration

The FAA is embarking on a major effort to overhaul and modernize the national airspace system. NextGen is centered around a transition from radar-based surveillance to satellite-based surveillance. It also includes plans to consolidate and realign air traffic control facilities and services, modify air traffic procedures, and alter the nature of the air traffic control profession. NATCA has always been a strong proponent of modernization and we have been instrumental in the development and implementation of some of the most successful innovations in air traffic control. However, we believe modernization must be done with the involvement of all stakeholders.

Of particular concern are efforts to consolidate and realign air traffic control facilities without input from the union and without a process for ensuring that required safety and efficiency improvements are met. Despite safety concerns and going against the expressed opposition of more than 170 Senators and Members of Congress, the FAA continues to execute its plans to consolidate and realign air traffic control functions and services without involving stakeholders and being forthright about the consequences of large-scale radar transfers.

NATCA believes it is vital to the success of NextGen for the FAA to engage the union in all modernization efforts, including realignments of infrastructure and personnel, by including our representatives in the decision-making process as subject matter experts.

ISSUE: Recognizing Air Traffic Services as Inherently Governmental

Air traffic services are intimately related to the public interest and significantly affect the life and property of private persons. Therefore, these services must be recognized and appropriately categorized as inherently governmental functions according to standards put forth by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). President Bush stripped air traffic services of its inherently governmental status by removing three words from an executive order in 2002. This action has left air traffic services vulnerable to privatization and outsourcing efforts and threatens the safety of the flying public by entrusting this country’s aviation system to profit-focused entities.

- **Will you support legislation that would permanently designate air traffic services currently performed by the FAA and its employees as inherently governmental?**

Yes, I support.

No, I do not support.

<p><u>QUESTION OR COMMENTS:</u></p>

ISSUE: Modernization of the Nation’s Air Traffic Control System

The FAA has embarked upon a large-scale modernization effort that it refers to as NextGen. NextGen encompasses projects ranging from new technology and air traffic procedures to realigning, relocating, and consolidating air traffic control facilities, to redefining the duties of air traffic controllers and pilots. As the primary users of the system, air traffic controllers are experts on air traffic infrastructure, technology and procedures. Working with NATCA throughout design, development and implementation stages of these projects will save the FAA time and taxpayers money while avoiding potential damage to the integrity of the air traffic control system. Rather than collaborate with NATCA however, the FAA has taken a go-it-alone approach that has already resulted in the implementation of faulty technology and untested procedures.

- **Will you support legislation that would require the FAA to collaborate meaningfully with NATCA on all stages of NextGen and other modernization efforts, from inception through implementation?**

Yes, I support.

No, I do not support.

<p><u>QUESTION OR COMMENTS:</u></p>

ISSUE: Severing, Relocating, and Consolidating Air Traffic Control Facilities and Services

In recent years, the FAA has begun to unilaterally realign air traffic control facilities. Radar and tower functions, which had been operated jointly for safe and seamless arrivals and departures, have been split into separate facilities at Memphis and Orlando Airports. The FAA has further plans to split tower and radar functions at additional airports and combine radar facilities into centralized locations, moving critical air traffic control functions far from the airports for which they are responsible. While NATCA is not categorically opposed to realignment initiatives we believe these changes should only be made when they provide operational benefit to users, and improve safety, efficiency and capacity, while saving taxpayer money. Meaningful stakeholder involvement will hold the FAA accountable, ensure that there is an operational benefit associated with the proposed changes, and mitigate any safety risks and negative effects on the workforce.

- **Will you oppose efforts to consolidate, split, or realign air traffic control facilities and services without collaboration with NATCA and other aviation stakeholders?**

Yes, I oppose.

No, I do not oppose.

<u>QUESTION OR COMMENTS:</u>

ISSUE: Air Traffic Controller Staffing

In 1998, the FAA and NATCA agreed upon the optimal number of controllers for each air traffic control facility based on a scientific study that factored in time-and-motion studies, sector complexity, workload, number of operations on the 90th percentile day, and relevant non-operational activities (i.e. training, annual/sick leave). Although the number of operations today is similar to that of 1998, the FAA has abandoned these standards in favor of staffing ranges concocted to conceal the severity of the current controller staffing shortage. NATCA believes that staffing standards should be based on the operational needs of the National Airspace System in order to ensure the continued safety of the flying public. NATCA supports collaborating with the FAA and an impartial third party expert, such as the National Academy of Sciences, in order to establish scientifically based staffing standards for each air traffic control facility.

- **Will you support legislation that would require the FAA to work with NATCA and an impartial third party, such as the National Academy of Sciences, to establish scientifically-based staffing standards for each air traffic control facility?**

Yes, I support.

No, I do not support.

<u>QUESTION OR COMMENTS:</u>

ISSUE: Air Traffic Controller Training

As a result of the high attrition rate following the imposed work rules, the FAA was forced to dramatically increase hiring to make up for the losses. A June 2008 report from the DOT Inspector General concluded that the FAA’s hiring process is outpacing the capabilities of many air traffic facilities to efficiently process and train new hires. This has created a backlog of trainees, slowing the certification process and forcing facilities to rely heavily on partially-certified trainees to work live traffic. NATCA is concerned about the effect that high trainee ratios have on the safety and capacity of the national airspace system. We believe that the FAA should work with NATCA and an impartial third party to determine the ratio of trainees that each facility can safely and efficiently handle. NATCA is also concerned that the FAA is concealing this problem and misleading stakeholders about the extent of the staffing shortage by failing to distinguish between trainees and fully certified controllers in its controller workforce plan.

- **Will you support legislation that would require the FAA to work with NATCA and an impartial third party, such as the National Academy of Sciences, to determine reasonable trainee ratios for each air traffic control facility and require the FAA to be open and forthright with stakeholders about trainees in the workforce?**

Yes, I support.

No, I do not support.

<p><u>QUESTION OR COMMENTS:</u></p>

ISSUE: Outsourcing Safety Oversight for Aircraft Certification

FAA aircraft certification engineers are critical to ensuring the safety of the skies by thoroughly testing and inspecting any new aircraft technology before it enters the National Airspace System. Many of those new technologies are developed and tested by designee engineers who work for aerospace companies, and their work is certified as safe by the FAA’s aerospace/certification engineers. During the past several years, the FAA has expanded the use of its designee program by delegating authority directly to private sector companies rather than to individual engineers, shifting critical safety responsibilities from government control. These private companies and individuals have a vested financial interest in speedy and complete certification, undermining their impartiality. Oversight has been further complicated by designee companies outsourcing production and design to foreign countries and a new FAA policy allowing designee companies to re-delegate to other companies (i.e. suppliers). In many cases, federal certification engineers and inspectors may not even know who the designee companies have chosen to act as their conduit. NATCA believes the expanded use of the designee program necessitates the hiring and training of additional aircraft certification engineers and inspectors.

- **Will you support legislation that would require the FAA to work with NATCA to expand and improve the aircraft certification and oversight infrastructure to meet the safety burden created by the expanded designee program?**

Yes, I support.

No, I do not support.

<p><u>QUESTION OR COMMENTS:</u></p>

- **Will you support appropriations that would fund the hiring of additional inspectors and engineers?**

Yes, I support.

No, I do not support.

<p><u>QUESTION OR COMMENTS:</u></p>
