



OKLAHOMA

February 24, 2021

The Honorable James Inhofe
United States Senate
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Inhofe:

On behalf of the State of Oklahoma and the six airports that participate in the Federal Aviation Administration Contract Tower Program, we are writing to express our strong support for the Continuity for Operators with Necessary Training Required for ATC Contract Towers Act of 2021, the “CONTRACT Act.” Your legislation would provide an incentive for retired federal controllers to continue working as controllers at airports that participate in the Federal Aviation Administration’s (FAA) Contract Tower Program.

We are concerned about the workforce challenges that are being faced across the aviation industry. Our six airports and the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission are working together and with Congress and the administration to ensure that there are enough controllers to accommodate the increasing staffing needs we face at FAA air traffic control facilities and at the six Oklahoma airports that participate in the FAA’s Contract Tower Program.

The CONTRACT Act would help by allowing controllers who retire from federal service to work as controllers at smaller contract tower airports without their federal annuity supplement being reduced or eliminated entirely. Making this simple fix would provide a much-needed financial incentive for retired federal controllers to continue working as controllers at contract tower airports.

Over the years, contract tower airports have benefited from the experience, expertise and leadership of retired federal air traffic controllers who have gone on to serve at contract towers. They continue to be an integral part of the Contract Tower Program and its ability to provide air traffic control services that enhance aviation safety at airports around the country.

We should do everything we can to make it easier for controllers who retire from the federal government to continue working at contract tower airports. Allowing retired federal controllers to keep their federal annuity while serving at contract tower airports would remove an unnecessary roadblock at a time when we are facing increasing staffing challenges in the Federal Contract Tower Program.

As you know, there is a precedent for allowing certain retired federal controllers to keep their full federal annuity, including the annuity supplement even when they continue to work after retirement. Several years ago, Congress overwhelmingly passed bipartisan legislation to allow retired FAA controllers to be employed as full-time air traffic control instructors under contract with the FAA without losing their annuity. The CONTRACT Act would simply expand that provision to include those retired federal controllers who work at contract tower airports.

Thank you for introducing the CONTRACT Act. We strongly support your common sense approach and look forward to working with you on other ways to address our workforce challenges.

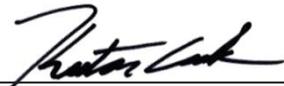
Sincerely,



Grayson Ardies
State Director of Aeronautics
Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission



Barbara McNally
Director
Lawton-Fort Sill Regional Airport



Keston Cook
Director
Enid Woodring Regional Airport



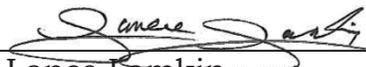
Paul Priegel
Director
Stillwater Regional Airport



Mark Kranenburg
Director
Department of Airports
City of Oklahoma City



Chase A. Tindle
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Ardmore Municipal Airport



Lance Lamkin
Administrator
Max Westheimer Airport