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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

STATEMENT OF JAMES M. BEGGS, UNDER SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE REGARDING S. 1799  
ON MONDAY, MARCH 13, 1972

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to have this opportunity to appear before the  
Committee today on behalf of Secretary Volpe in support of S. 1799.  
With me this morning is Mr. John H. Shaffer, Administrator of the  
Federal Aviation Administration. Mr. Shaffer and his associates  
will discuss with you our efforts to improve the air traffic controller  
career program and will set forth the major provisions of S. 1799.  
Before he does, I wish to offer a few comments to emphasize the  
Department's need for this measure and to indicate its importance to  
the effective management of the air traffic control system.

In the past two decades, tremendous technological gains have  
been made in our air traffic control system. There has been an  
almost continual process of improvement, expansion, and development.  
The 1950's saw the advent of radar and improved navigational  
equipment. The 1960's brought the first widespread implementation of  
automation techniques. In 1970, we opened a new central flow control  
facility which gives us for the first time a total nation-wide air  
traffic picture. We are moving ahead rapidly with our automation  
program, with additional progress daily.

In considering milestones of our development in this area, we must place at the top of the list passage of the Airport and Airway Development Act of 1970. This Act is enabling us to provide the badly needed facility and hardware items, such as control towers, instrument landing systems, radars and the latest in modern automated equipment.

Despite these technological gains of the past and those which the future is sure to bring, our air traffic control system does, and will continue to have as its single most important element the air traffic controller. Our's is a "people system", Mr. Chairman. Nearly 20,000 controllers staff our towers and centers, and it is they who make the system work with the safety and efficiency that is the standard of the world.

The duties and responsibilities of a person who chooses a career as an air traffic controller are truly unique. The career presents an exciting challenge and involvement in one of the most dynamic and forward-looking industries of today. Part of that challenge is the very serious responsibility for safeguarding air travelers throughout the nation. In the discharge of this responsibility there is very little tolerance for error.

As the growth of aviation continues to place increasing demands on our air traffic control system, the demands on our controllers have correspondingly increased and become more complex. Our experience shows that advancing years do not improve a controller's performance at his most difficult tasks, yet the skills which he learns during his years

of dedicated service have limited applicability to other jobs. There is little opportunity to find similar work at comparable salaries for one who can no longer meet the rigors of the job.

We must effectively deal now with the demands being placed on the air traffic control system or face the distinct possibility of diminishing safety and efficiency in the system. We feel that S. 1799 is a key part of the solution. We feel we have presented to the Congress a sensible, workable proposal, and we strongly recommend its enactment into law. We respectfully request prompt action on this measure so that we can get on with the job of meeting the needs of the air traffic control system and our air traffic controllers.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my prepared statement. At this time, Mr. Shaffer will present his statement, and he and his staff will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.