

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DREW LEWIS, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION,  
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE, SUBCOMMITTEE  
ON EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS. APRIL 30, 1981.

MADAME CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

I appreciate having the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee today. Although this marks my first appearance before the Subcommittee, I am well aware of the long and productive association between the Post Office and Civil Service Committee and the Department's Federal Aviation Administration. I intend to continue this productive relationship.

The record of aviation safety that the United States has compiled is exceptional. The job done by the FAA workforce in helping to build that record make me proud to be associated with this Department. Lynn Helms, the new FAA Administrator, and I intend to see that the record of aviation safety in the United States continues to receive the FAA's highest priority.

I realize that the Subcommittee is interested in the Department's views on the controller-oriented legislation pending before the Subcommittee. However, I am unable to offer, on behalf of the Department, a public position on the substantive provisions of this legislation. Many of the provisions in the proposed bill are mirrored in proposals by the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization, (PATCO), at the collective bargaining table. While some aspects of these proposals may be non-negotiable, due to the statutory basis of labor-management relations in the Federal sector, the proposed legislation nevertheless does relate directly to the tenor of the ongoing negotiations for a new labor contract between PATCO and the FAA. For the Department to take a public posture

on this legislation in the midst of labor negotiations would, in my estimation, be imprudent. We have carefully limited our public comments concerning labor-management issues throughout these negotiations and we intend to continue this position. In fact, our careful approach to discussing the ongoing negotiations is responsible, in large measure, for my being here today rather than Lynn Helms. Because of Administrator Helms' involvement in these negotiations, which is certainly more direct than mine, it is more appropriate for me to participate in this hearing.

We appreciate the contributions which this group of employees have made and which have warranted special treatment. For example, air traffic controllers were granted special benefits under P.L. 92-297, allowing for retirement at age 55 with 20 years of air traffic controller experience or at any age with 25 years of such experience, with a guaranteed annuity of at least 50% of the controllers "high three" salary. More recently, more than one-third (over 9000) of the air traffic controller positions have been upgraded for the journeyman level from GS-13 to GS-14. Despite the stringent controls which this Administration firmly believes must be placed on federal spending, as well as manpower levels, we nevertheless have recognized the important contribution which air traffic controllers are making to aviation safety. Such recognition can continue, as it should, within the accepted framework of federal employment.

This completes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to questions you may have.