

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DARRELL M. TRENT, DEPUTY SECRETARY
OF TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS, SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND GENERAL SERVICES,
DECEMBER 4, 1981

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I welcome the opportunity to appear before the Committee today to testify in support of a bill proposed by the Department of Transportation. The bill would recognize the dedicated work being performed by key FAA operational employees and assist us in our efforts to rebuild the air traffic system. Secretary Lewis has asked me to express both his appreciation to the Committee for holding these hearings and his regrets that a long-standing commitment to be out of the country prevents him from being here today.

The legislation before you today fulfills a commitment that this Administration made in good faith to the working controllers who stood by their oath and stood by their responsibility to the public, keeping our air traffic control system operating safely and efficiently.

The safety mission performed by these FAA employees is vital to our air transportation system. This legislation can contribute to the United States' unmatched air safety record.

Under the tentative agreement we reached with PATCO last June, we agreed to seek legislation that would have provided an average pay increase of 6.6 percent to our controller workforce. When that tentative agreement was rejected by PATCO and the strike occurred, we assured our working controllers that we would stand by our promise

and propose legislation for those who remained on the job. The legislation before you is intended to provide the same average 6.6 percent pay increase called for in the tentative agreement signed earlier.

Since Administrator Helms will describe the details of our proposed legislation, I won't go into those at this time. There are, however, two key issues that I would like to comment on for the Committee. The first deals with the timing of our submission of the legislative package to the Congress, and the second with its cost.

One criticism which has been raised is that DOT had waited until early November to submit its legislation to the Congress; yet, at the same time, was arguing for its early enactment. Let me respond, first, by saying why we believe the legislation merits prompt enactment by the Congress.

The people who have been called upon to keep our country's air traffic moving safely and efficiently in the wake of the PATCO strike have performed in extraordinary fashion. The amount of traffic moved safely during that time shows clearly that these people have carried out their jobs in the best traditions of public service. We believe these efforts merit recognition now, not at some time in the future.

As to why we did not submit the proposed legislation to the Congress until the beginning of November, the answer is simple. Since we had been negotiating with PATCO over the content of legislation we would recommend to the Congress, we concluded that it would be inappropriate to propose legislation affecting air controller pay until a decision was handed down by the Federal Labor Relations Authority on the issue of PATCO's status. In late October, the FLRA decided to decertify PATCO. Our legislative proposal to the Congress followed promptly thereafter.

Let me now address some of the questions regarding the cost of this package.

We project the cost of this legislation to be \$57.4 million in fiscal year 1982. The tentative agreement we had reached with PATCO, later rejected, would have cost \$40 million for controllers and \$4 million for supervisors, a total of \$44 million. Apparently the difference between those two figures, particularly since we have fewer controllers now, has led to the assumption that our package must exceed the 6.6 percent we originally agreed to support before the Congress. That is not the case.

The differences in the two proposals relate to those being covered.

Where \$40 million was estimated for all the controllers in the PATCO bargaining unit, a total of \$21 million is currently estimated for the 9,100 controllers now at work. At the time we negotiated the tentative contract with PATCO, we also intended to cover our supervisory controller personnel as well, although they were not in the bargaining unit. The cost of coverage for those employees was not included in the \$40 million publicized in connection with that tentative agreement, but it was accounted for in our budgetary planning.

In the interest of equity, we are also proposing coverage for other key players in the operation and maintenance of our air traffic control system, along with flight test pilots. This treatment is warranted in recognition of the responsibilities they all undertake in behalf of the flying public.

Therefore, the legislation before you costs more than the \$40 million package with PATCO because it includes FAA operational and supervisory personnel outside the former bargaining unit of the controllers. To put these costs in perspective, originally a

population of 17,500 would have received \$44 million in pay increases. Now, a population of 25,600 employees will receive pay increases totalling \$57.4 million.

In closing, I would urge the expeditious approval of this legislation by the Committee. It is important to recognize at this time the many outstanding contributions FAA employees made in the aftermath of the illegal controllers' strike. Let me also emphasize that these same employees will continue to be called upon to carry out substantial responsibilities on behalf of the people who depend upon our national air transportation system. The employees covered by this legislation have assisted us in achieving a level of aviation safety unequalled anywhere else in the world. Their responsibilities, their achievements and their commitment to public service merit our recognition and -- in my judgment -- justify the benefits we are proposing.

Mr. Chairman, that completes my prepared statement. I turn now to Administrator Lynn Helms who will outline for you the major features of our legislative proposal.