



# NEWS

## AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

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## House Votes To Privatize More Air Traffic Control Towers

*Good move by House; President supports bill, while Senate Democrats promise filibuster.*

WASHINGTON – On Thursday, the House passed an aviation spending bill that would increase the number of privately run air traffic control towers. The four-year, \$60 billion bill is strongly supported by the Bush administration but intensely opposed by Democrats and the air traffic controllers union, who claim lives will be put in jeopardy without government-run air traffic control.

Exclaiming that he doesn't want "to go home on an airplane that isn't as safe as it can be," Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) promised to filibuster the final aviation bill if it does not forbid privatizing air traffic control. Supporters argue that air traffic control can be handled just as safely and more efficiently by the private sector.

**"Perhaps Sen. Lautenberg can explain why it will be so dangerous for private sector employees to run air traffic control,"** said Grover Norquist, President of Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) in Washington D.C. **"Why would air travel is automatically made safe because government employees are up in the air traffic control towers? Since we live in an imperfect world, the only way to make air travel perfectly safe is to ban it altogether. But safety isn't what the opponents of this bill are concerned about. Rather, we're seeing unions who do not want to face the pressure of competition, and their Democrat lackeys who do not want to lose a valuable source of graft."**

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) began contracting for air traffic control after President Reagan fired 11,000 striking air traffic controllers in 1981. Initially, the FAA contracted air traffic operations to 60 small airports, but today there are 219 smaller airports---out of a total of 484 airports across the country, that have air traffic control handled by private employees instead of government employees. After the House passed the aviation bill, John Carr, president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, accused Republicans of making air traffic control "vulnerable to privatization."

**"Americans are not dying by the thousands because air traffic controllers, whether private or public, have every incentive in the world to keep air travelers safe. Democrats are opposed to privatizing more controllers because it will dry up union dues for them – another reason to cheer this bill."**

Americans for Tax Reform (ATR) is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who oppose all federal, state and local tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or at [jcollegio@atr.org](mailto:jcollegio@atr.org).