

March 7, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
254 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz:

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is at a critical junction. The aviation industry has rebounded rapidly from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, it is dealing with rapid advances in aviation technology, building up America’s aging aviation infrastructure, and the need to recruit a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. There is no shortage of work to be done, and the FAA requires strong leadership to help the safety agency meet current and future challenges.

As former leaders of the FAA, we know how important it is to have a Senate-confirmed Administrator. Each of us went through the Senate confirmation process and respect the Constitutional role of the Senate to “advise and consent” on Presidential nominees. We also know what it takes to effectively run the FAA.

During the recent nomination hearing for Phillip A. Washington, CEO of the Denver International Airport, some members of the committee questioned whether Mr. Washington had the requisite experience and skills to lead the FAA.

First, what is invaluable in leading the FAA is experience with managing large, complex organizations. The FAA has an expansive safety mission, crossing five lines of business, and encompassing nearly 45,000 employees. Each day, the FAA oversees more than 45,000 flights and 2.9 million airline passengers across 29 million square miles of airspace. The agency is responsible for operating a large technology-based system to manage air traffic, for regulating manufacturers, operators, and pilots and technicians, and for developing standards and providing financial support for airport infrastructure. All of this is done as a partnership between the government and the aviation industry to ensure that we have the safest and most efficient aerospace system in the world.

Mr. Washington has run several large complex organizations. At Denver Regional Transit, he oversaw 3,000 employees, moved 49 million people safely each year. At LA Metro, he oversaw 10,000 employees, safely moving 255 million passenger-boardings each year, with a \$9 billion operating budget. In his current role at Denver International Airport, he leads 35,000 employees, serves 70 million passengers per year, and oversees a \$1.2 billion operating budget.

Second, while aviation experience is important, this is not limited to flying airplanes. None of us were pilots—in fact only two of the last five confirmed Administrators have been pilots. Yet, each

of us had transportation, technology, and aviation-related backgrounds that prepared us for our jobs. All of us understood the importance of building partnerships, the need to work closely with industry, and how to bring together the best technical experts in the FAA and the private sector.

Mr. Washington, as the leader of the world's third busiest airport, has the necessary aviation safety experience to be Administrator. Running an airport involves overseeing large-scale infrastructure projects and managing business operations. But, to be clear, the safety mission is at the top of the daily agenda for every airport.

Under federal aviation regulations – 14 CFR Part 139 – FAA issues airport operating certificates to airports in order to ensure safety in air transportation. To obtain a certificate, an airport must agree to certain operational and safety standards, subject to ongoing FAA surveillance and supervision. Airport directors, like Mr. Washington, are ultimately responsible for ensuring that his or her airport remains in full compliance with all aspects of safety. One of us, Jane Garvey, also had a tenure running a large U.S. airport and understands very well how important that experience was in leading the FAA.

Third, being the Administrator requires the vision and standing to make sure that the FAA is the international “gold standard” for aviation safety. For 45 years, Mr. Washington has led a life dedicated to public service. Following a 24-year career in the U.S. Army, he retired as Command Sergeant Major, the highest ranking a non-commissioned servicemember can achieve, and received the prestigious Defense Superior Service Medal. This is an inspiring record of hard work and achievement. If confirmed, he would be the first African American Administrator.

The FAA has gone through a difficult period and Mr. Washington offers a fresh perspective for setting a new course. Having a 30,000-foot view does not require getting a pilot's license.

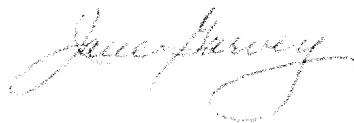
The FAA needs leadership, and it needs it now.

We urge you to move swiftly to confirm Phil Washington as FAA Administrator.

Sincerely,



**Michael Huerta**  
Acting Secretary of Transportation  
FAA Administrator  
Acting FAA Administrator  
Deputy FAA Administrator  
2010-2018



**Jane Garvey**  
FAA Administrator  
1997-2002



**Linda Daschle**  
Acting FAA Administrator  
Deputy FAA Administrator  
1993-1997