

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 4, 2019

The Hon. Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Rick Larsen
Chairman
Subcommittee on Aviation
U.S. House of Representatives
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Chairman Larsen,

As members of the New York City delegation, we respectfully request that the committee conduct a hearing in the near future to investigate the impact of the Trump Shutdown on aviation safety.

As we are sure you know, the recent Trump Shutdown had an enormous impact on the safety, stability and security of our nation's aviation system. This dire situation took a particular toll on New York City, culminating in the complete suspension of arrivals at LaGuardia National Airport, a major regional hub that receives millions of travelers to our city each year. It also created major delays and traveler frustration at John F. Kennedy International Airport, which was unable to operate at full capacity given enormous staffing shortages. The already-dense airspace over New York City can only handle so much interruption before safety conditions pose a threat to travel.

That being said, the safety issues we experienced are not limited to New York, but were seen around the nation. Numerous federal employees, from air traffic controllers to transportation security officers to safety inspectors were either furloughed or required to work more than a month without pay. Pressed for cash to pay their bills, many began taking additional days off to work other jobs that would provide immediate income. Others simply left for other jobs, leaving our travel safety and security agencies woefully understaffed as the government reopened. Even scarier – thousands of routine inspections of aircraft and aviation infrastructure ceased to take place, and the backlog and delay could be putting travelers at a serious risk for some time to come.

We believe the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and its Aviation Subcommittee are the perfect venues to investigate these issues and develop solutions that lessen the repercussions of the Trump Shutdown on aviation. Congress must find out not only how were travelers impacted, but also how the shutdown impacted thousands of hardworking federal employees who keep our skies safe. And we must also investigate how the shutdown exacerbated existing understaffing and backlog issues and how these can be addressed in the coming months. There are numerous individuals across the aviation industry and government who would be willing to serve as witnesses before the committee to share their insights on the record and lend their thoughts for how we can mitigate the dangers to safety and our air travel network in the future. It is critical that we hear from them as we look to clean up the mess this shutdown created.

We know you share our concerns for the safety of our nation's air travelers and the security and stability of our aviation system. So, we thank you for taking this request under consideration and look forward to working with you to facilitate this important fact-finding mission that we hope will lead to impactful solutions.

Sincerely,



ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress



GRACE MENG
Member of Congress



GREGORY W. MEEKS
Member of Congress



YVETTE D. CLARKE
Member of Congress



MAX ROSE
Member of Congress



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Member of Congress



CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress



JERROLD NADLER
Member of Congress



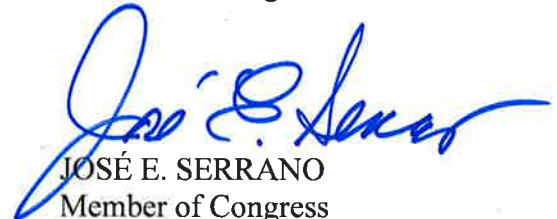
THOMAS R. SUOZZI
Member of Congress



HAKEEM S. JEFFRIES
Member of Congress



KATHLEEN M. RICE
Member of Congress



JOSÉ E. SERRANO
Member of Congress



NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress