

**Remarks of U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall, II**  
**Ranking Member**  
**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**  
**Subcommittee on Aviation Hearing on “Implementation of FAA Modernization and**  
**Reform Act: One Year Later”**  
**February 27, 2013**

I would like to thank Chairman LoBiondo for calling today’s hearing on implementation of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill. The bill was signed into law a year and two weeks ago, which would ordinarily make this an appropriate time for the Subcommittee to hear about how the FAA is implementing the bill’s many requirements. But there is an elephant in the room – sequestration – that seriously threatens the stability that we thought we had achieved by enacting a multi-year FAA reauthorization.

If sequestration occurs on March 1, as appears likely, almost every single one of the FAA’s 47,000 employees will be furloughed. Radio beacons and radars could sit unused while the technicians who repair them are at home without pay. Planes will stack up in the air and line up on the ground as air traffic control struggles to cope with the furlough of hundreds of controllers on any given day. And more than 200 air traffic control towers, including almost all of the control towers in my home state of West Virginia, could be closed – possibly for good.

Sequestration will have dire consequences for rural America, which, in many ways, depends on aviation more than any other part of our country. Congress made a commitment in the FAA bill to protect aviation for rural America – by, for example, continuing the Essential Air Service program; by improving the safety of air ambulances that save the lives of thousands of Americans in rural areas; by directing the FAA to give pilots more tools to access rural airports in bad weather. But I fear that, if the FAA is forced to absorb a \$600 million-plus budget cut, the needs of rural America could again be put aside as the FAA struggles to cope with demand in major metropolitan areas, where flight delays could top 90 minutes.

As we stand on the precipice, I cannot help but think: Here we go again. The FAA limped along under 23 short-term extensions before a long-term reauthorization was finally enacted last year. And in 2011, Republican leadership’s scorched-earth policy of negotiating the long-term bill caused a two-week FAA shutdown that almost 4,000 employees on furlough without pay and cost almost \$400 million in lost revenue. Now, the Republican leadership’s failure to come to the table and work out a balanced approach to our fiscal challenges will again cost the flying public, not to mention tens of thousands of dedicated federal employees, dearly.

I look forward to hearing from Administrator Huerta on the FAA’s plans to implement sequestration while ensuring that rural America, where aviation is a vital lifeline and a way of life, is not forgotten. Thank you again, Chairman LoBiondo, for calling this particularly well-timed hearing.