

pressing workforce problem, and that is the shortage of over 3,000 air traffic controllers. Everyone knows that these air traffic controllers are what guide us every day to the safety of our destinations. This bill recognizes that we have shortchanged that investment, with air traffic controllers sometimes working as many as 6 days a week. We need a workforce that is going to continue to tackle these challenges, and this bill makes the investment so that happens.

We have seen the FAA fall short of goals before in workforce training, but this staffing model and the FAA staffing committed to in this bill will help us fill that gap.

I want to thank Senators KLOBUCHAR, DUCKWORTH, WARNOCK, MORAN, THUNE, PETERS, and KELLY for their Aviation Workforce Development Grant Program in this legislation. It helps us grow pilots, mechanics, engineers, and technical workforce and streamline the job pathway for veterans who have real skill in the military and can more easily help us fill these aviation roles.

Our bill requires the GAO to also study airport worker standards, a step toward getting our baggage handlers, our ramp workers, and our aircraft cleaners the pay and benefits they deserve.

This bill also does something for the first time for consumers. It says that you deserve a refund after a 3-hour delay, even if you have a nonrefundable ticket. You also deserve a refund for an international flight if it has been delayed for 6 hours. And you can get that refund immediately by talking to the carrier or, if you decide you just don't even want to be on the delayed flight, you can get a refund.

I want to thank Senators MARKEY and VANCE for a mandate in the bill that says families get to sit together, and you can't charge us more. If the airlines break these rules, guess what happens. The DOT Assistant Secretary is authorized to issue penalties up to \$75,000 for fines and penalties to have a strong deterrent here.

I also want to thank Subcommittee Chair DUCKWORTH for her leadership in making sure airlines better accommodate passengers with disabilities. It is because of her unbelievable advocacy here that we are going to reduce the damage that is done to wheelchairs and to the passengers who have to make these flights for their own needs, and I certainly thank Senator DUCKWORTH, who is one of our national heroes and veterans, for her unbelievable pilot expertise in helping us.

Senators TESTER, FISCHER, and SULLIVAN are to be commended for their hard work to improve the Essential Air Service Program for small and rural communities that need important economic lifelines to have aviation in their community. We authorized a record \$1.7 billion for that program.

And, overall, airport infrastructure is getting a big boost too. I thank Senators PETERS, BALDWIN, and WARNOCK for championing making sure that air-

ports dispose of harmful chemicals that are harmful to all of us.

And I want to thank the Presiding Officer Senator HICKENLOOPER and Senators ROSEN, MORAN, THUNE, YOUNG, WARNER, and WICKER, who helped usher in the next generation of technologies for aviation—not just drones and air mobility aircraft but also the research and development necessary to see the electric and hydrogen-powered aircraft industry take off in the future. Companies like ZeroAvia in my State and Universal Hydrogen are leading the way with the next generation of strategies that will help us make these technologies a reality.

I just will say, too, that this legislation gives the FAA the direction to provide safe operating standards for advanced air mobility and safety for the 2028 Olympics, coming soon, in Los Angeles.

And I also thank Senators THUNE and WARNER for their legislation creating a pathway for drones to operate beyond the visual line of sight, which we have also included in this bill. And I acknowledge Senator ROSEN's hard work on the legislation for grants so that States are using the U.S.-manufactured drones to inspect, repair, and fix critical infrastructure.

So my colleagues can see that this legislation is full of safety improvements. It helps address a huge part of our U.S. economy. It helps make the aviation system today work better and guarantee that we are going to continue to focus on this for the future.

So I thank all my colleagues. I urge them to support the motion to move forward on this legislation that we will be taking shortly and get this to the House before the May 10 deadline. It is great bipartisan, bicameral work. But most importantly, it is safety improvements for our aviation system.

I yield the floor.

NOMINATION OF GEORGIA N. ALEXAKIS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, today, the Senate will vote to confirm Georgia Alexakis to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Born in Chicago, IL, Ms. Alexakis earned her A.B., magna cum laude, from Harvard College and her J.D., magna cum laude, from Northwestern Pritzker School of Law. Following law school, she clerked for Judge Marsha S. Berzon of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and Judge Milton I. Shadur of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Ms. Alexakis began her legal career in private practice handling breach of contract claims, tax disputes, and product liability matters. In 2013, she became an assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois. In her first 4 years with the USAO, she served in the General Crimes and Narcotics and Money Laundering Sections, handling all aspects of criminal investigations and prosecution, discovery, and all trial stages. In 2019, she became the deputy chief of appeals, maintaining

her investigative and trial work while supervising other prosecutors on appellate briefs and oral argument preparations. She also served as the civil rights and hate crimes program coordinator during this time. She returned to private practice in 2022 as partner with Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP. Later that year, she returned to the USAO as the chief of appeals in the Criminal Division.

Over the course of her legal career, Ms. Alexakis has tried 10 cases to verdict, 8 of which were in Federal court, and has argued approximately 30 appeals in the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. The American Bar Association unanimously rated Ms. Alexakis as "well qualified," and she has the strong support of myself and Senator DUCKWORTH.

Ms. Alexakis's courtroom experience, management credentials, and knowledge of the Northern District make her well-positioned to serve on the bench with distinction.

I was proud to recommend Ms. Alexakis to the White House, and I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting her nomination.

VOTE ON ALEXAKIS NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Alexakis nomination?

Ms. CANTWELL. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Arizona (Mr. KELLY) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The result was announced—yeas 54, nays 44, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 156 Ex.]

YEAS—54

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rounds
Booker	Hirono	Schatz
Brown	Kaine	Schumer
Butler	King	Shaheen
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Sinema
Cardin	Lujan	Smith
Carper	Manchin	Stabenow
Casey	Markey	Tester
Collins	Menendez	Tillis
Coons	Merkley	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Fetterman	Ossoff	Welch
Gillibrand	Padilla	Whitehouse
Graham	Peters	Wyden

NAYS—44

Barrasso	Daines	Marshall
Blackburn	Ernst	McConnell
Boozman	Fischer	Moran
Braun	Grassley	Mullin
Britt	Hagerty	Paul
Budd	Hawley	Ricketts
Capito	Hoeben	Risch
Cassidy	Hyde-Smith	Romney
Cornyn	Johnson	Rubio
Cotton	Kennedy	Schmitt
Cramer	Lankford	Scott (FL)
Crapo	Lee	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Lummis	

Sullivan Thune	Tuberville Vance	Wicker Young
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NOT VOTING—2

Kelly	Sanders
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The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

SECURING GROWTH AND ROBUST LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN AVIATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Resumed

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume legislative session and resume consideration of the motion to proceed to H.R. 3935, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

Motion to proceed to Calendar No. 211, H.R. 3935, a bill to amend title 49, United States Code, to reauthorize and improve the Federal Aviation Administration and other civil aviation programs, and for other purposes.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 1:04 p.m., recessed until 2 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Ms. ROSEN).

SECURING GROWTH AND ROBUST LEADERSHIP IN AMERICAN AVIATION ACT—MOTION TO PROCEED—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Ohio.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, you joined us last year to do the reading we are doing today, so I am glad the Presiding Officer is here presiding today.

It is an honor to join my colleagues of both parties on the floor today to read Dr. King's letter from the Birmingham jail. I thank Senator CASSIDY, who will go first, and Senators CASEY, LANKFORD, KING, BRITT, and BUTLER, who will wrap it up, for joining me today for this annual bipartisan tradition.

Every year, we bring together three Republicans and three Democrats to read one of the greatest pieces of writing of the 20th century and reflect on the mission and the powerful words of Dr. King.

This year, our reading falls right after Workers' Memorial Day, which

we marked on Sunday, a day when we honor all the workers killed on the job over the past year, workers who were injured, and workers who were injured and killed throughout our history.

Every year on that date, I am reminded of Dr. King's final trip—his second trip of the year, his final trip—to Memphis. He went to stand with Black sanitation workers striking for better pay and safer working conditions. They were some of the most exploited workers in the country, with unfair wages and unsafe conditions.

Months earlier, two Black workers had been killed in a tragic accident that surely could have been prevented. Mr. Echol Cole and Mr. Robert Walker had showed up to work in segregated Memphis, working in a segregated neighborhood. During their shift, a storm hit. Mr. Cole and Mr. Walker had to huddle in the back of the truck, surrounded by garbage, to shield themselves from the rain.

Segregated Memphis. Segregated neighborhood. Segregated sanitation truck, I might add.

The truck malfunctioned. These two young men—36 and 30 years old, with wives and families and their whole lives ahead of them—were crushed. The White workers in the front of the cab were not, obviously.

Dr. King knew discrimination killed those men as much as their work conditions had. He understood the deep connections between civil rights and worker rights. He understood that all labor has dignity.

Until we have equal rights for all and dignity for all workers, our work remains unfinished. We have a long road left to travel. It is up to each of us to push our country further along that road. That is the message of Dr. King's words. That is why I ask my colleagues to join us on the floor every year.

He wrote on scraps of paper while in solitary confinement in April 1963 in the Birmingham jail, with only his memory to pull from. He referenced two texts again and again: the Bible and Howard Thurman—who was one of his important spiritual counselors—Howard Thurman's book "Jesus and the Disinherited."

My friend Dr. Otis Moss, who lives in Cleveland, told me Dr. King always carried these two books with him. Before every trip or speech or march, he packed them into his briefcase.

In his letter, Dr. King was responding to White moderate ministers who told him: Slow down. Don't move too fast. Don't demand too much all at once.

They told him wait and things would change, but Dr. King, at that point, knew better. He knew "wait" meant never. He knew progress only happens when you push and when you don't give up.

In the letter, Dr. King made that point more eloquently and persuasively than any of us ever could.

Senator CASSIDY—Dr. CASSIDY—was just standing here with Senator BUTLER and me marveling at the wisdom

and the skill of his words, all inspiring us to write better on our account too.

The reading begins with Senator CASSIDY of Louisiana. Thank you for joining us again this year.

Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I thank Senator BROWN, and I thank my colleagues.

APRIL 16, 1963.

MY DEAR FELLOW CLERGYMEN:

While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely." Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in." I have the honor of serving as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization operating in every southern state, with headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. We have some eighty five affiliated organizations across the South, and one of them is the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Frequently we share staff, educational and financial resources with our affiliates. Several months ago the affiliate here in Birmingham asked us to be on call to engage in a non-violent direct action program if such were deemed necessary. We readily consented, and when the hour came we lived up to our promise. So I, along with several members of my staff, am here because I was invited here. I am here because I have organizational ties here.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds.

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: Collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation;