

# Duckworth Applauds Confirmation Of FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)—member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation (CST) and Chair of its Subcommittee on Aviation Safety, Operations and Innovation—issued the following statement after the United States Senate voted to confirm Michael Whitaker as Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Whitaker’s confirmation comes amid a chilling surge in near-fatal misses involving commercial

airlines that likely stems from plummeting aviation workforce experience levels after airlines paid tens of thousands of their most experienced pilots to stop flying, along with a wave of air traffic controller retirements.

“At a time when our nation is experiencing an alarming aviation safety crisis, we need an FAA Administrator who will uphold the strongest pilot experience and training certification standards that ensure the flying public safety before our luck runs out and this year’s near-misses become next year’s deadly collisions. After my discussions with Mr. Whitaker about the importance of the 1,500-hour rule as part of our post-Colgan aviation safety regime, I’m proud to help confirm Mr. Whitaker to be the next FAA Administrator. As Chair of the Senate’s Aviation Safety Subcommittee, I look forward to working with him to defend the significant progress protecting the flying public’s lives we’ve made post-Colgan without weakening or watering down current minimum flight hour standards.”

During his nomination hearing earlier this month, Duckworth [pushed](#) Whitaker to uphold the highest standards for airline transport pilot certification, including the 1,500-hour rule, if he is confirmed. Throughout FAA reauthorization negotiations, Duckworth has been a fierce, outspoken advocate of the 1,500-hour rule, having [delivered](#) an impassioned speech on the Senate floor on the importance of upholding the strong pilot certification standards and warning her colleagues of the deadly consequences of complacency in aviation.

Last month, Duckworth virtually met with Whitaker to discuss many critical issues facing our aviation industry, including efforts to weaken the 1,500-hour rule. As one of the authors of the bipartisan [FAA Reauthorization Act of 2023](#), Duckworth successfully [secured](#) several provisions that would improve safety for consumers, expand the aviation workforce and enhance protections for travelers with disabilities. As introduced, the FAA reauthorization bill would extend FAA’s authorities through the Fiscal Year 2028 without degrading pilot certification standards.