

Duckworth Chairs Aviation Safety Subcommittee Hearing, Reiterates Need to Uphold Strongest Pilot Training Certification Standards

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator and pilot Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)—a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation (CST)

—chaired an Aviation Safety, Operations and Innovation subcommittee hearing to address the chilling surge in near-deadly close calls involving commercial airlines that is adding [serious pressure](#) to our aviation workforce and putting the safety of the flying public at risk. As our nation continues to experience this aviation safety crisis, Duckworth reiterated the need to preserve and strengthen the post-Colgan U.S. aviation system—including upholding the 1,500-hour rule—in order to prevent future tragedies like the [deadly Colgan crash of 2009](#). Full videos of Senator Duckworth’s opening remarks and questions are available using the links [here](#) and [here](#).

“Our nation is experiencing an aviation safety crisis with near-misses that are happening way too frequently—and I refuse to be complacent in waiting for the next tragedy to occur before we take action to save lives,” said Duckworth. “For the sake of the flying public’s safety, we must work together across the aviation community to uphold the strongest safety standards—like the 1,500-hour rule—and strengthen the post-Colgan era safety system before our luck runs out and this year’s near-misses become next year’s deadly collisions.”

According to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the most serious runway incursions have increased approximately 43% from FY 2022 to FY 2023. This aviation safety crisis coincides with a severe air traffic controller staffing shortage where FAA is operating with about 1,200 less air traffic controllers than they were a decade ago against a 50% increase in air traffic demand over that same period. Duckworth called on NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy to re-examine fatigue and update Air Traffic Controller rest rules, similar to pilot rest and crew rest rules that were updated in 2012.

Shining a light on the severity of these recent near-misses, Duckworth presented several visual examples of incidents where it was experienced pilots that prevented a close call from becoming a disaster. Among these examples included an [image](#) she had with her which showed how a Jet Blue passenger flight came within 400 feet of a Hop-a-Jet charter flight taking off from an intersecting runway—despite receiving explicit instructions to line up and wait. Duckworth said, “In far too many near-misses, the difference between a close call and deadly disaster has depended on a single individual taking emergency action, along with some good luck... but continuing to count on such good fortune is neither sustainable nor responsible.”

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. Duckworth successfully [secured](#) several provisions that would improve safety for consumers, expand the aviation workforce and enhance protections for travelers with disabilities in

the bipartisan [*FAA Reauthorization Act of 2023*](#) that she helped author and introduce. As introduced, the FAA reauthorization bill would extend FAA's authorities through the Fiscal Year 2028 without degrading pilot certification standards.