



# **Duckworth: We Need to Judge Boeing by What It Does, Not By What It Says**

by Celia Olivas

April 17 2024 2:02 PM



– U.S. Senator and pilot Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)—a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation (CST) and Chair of the CST Subcommittee on Aviation Safety, Operations and Innovation—sharply criticized Boeing’s repeated bad behaviors relating to the 737 MAX program, outlining several examples of the aerospace giant failing to live up to its claim that it prioritizes safety above all else. During today’s CST hearing on the Federal Aviation Administration

(FAA)’s Organization Designation Authorization (ODA) Expert Panel Report, Duckworth also underscored that the FAA must scrutinize Boeing’s bad behavior more closely and make use of its civil enforcement authority more often when appropriate. The Senator explained that by looking past Boeing’s bad behavior far too much, the FAA sent a message to both Boeing and its employees that bad behavior is acceptable and that the company can get away with it. A full video of Senator Duckworth’s remarks can be found on [YouTube](#) and photos can be found on [the Senator’s website](#).

“Weeks after a door plug blew out of a 737 MAX 9, Boeing was still petitioning the FAA for a safety exemption to rush its next 737 MAX variant into service—despite the fact that it had a known, potentially catastrophic safety defect,” said Senator Duckworth in her opening statement before the CST Committee. “To its credit, under pressure, Boeing eventually withdrew that petition. But the fact that Boeing filed it in the first place speaks volumes about the lack of a proper safety culture at Boeing, and, until recently, the lack of a proper regulatory culture at FAA.”

Painting a fuller picture of Boeing’s dangerous pattern of bad behavior, Duckworth also recalled how the company downplayed the presence of Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS) on 737 MAX planes—which led to deadly, catastrophic consequences for hundreds of passengers. Additionally, Duckworth highlighted how Boeing intentionally concealed that the AOA Disagree Alert wasn’t functioning on most 737 MAX jets—which was a violation of the plane’s approved design—from airlines, pilots and the FAA. When details about both of these incidents surfaced, the FAA did nothing.

Duckworth continued: “I am pleased by the more aggressive regulatory tone Administrator Whitaker has brought to the agency—but as this Expert Panel Review makes clear—there is still a long way to go to bring an effective safety culture back to Boeing. We have our work cut out for us on this committee as we continue our oversight and consider whether additional legislation may be needed.”

Earlier this month, Duckworth [urged](#) FAA Administrator Michael Whitaker to examine why pilots were not aware that the cockpit door on the 737 MAX 9 was designed to automatically open during a rapid depressurization event until after the door plug fell out of Alaska Airlines flight 1282. In her letter, Duckworth also called on the Administrator to take into account other recent instances where Boeing failed to disclose 737 MAX flight deck features to pilots as FAA considers its response to this latest cockpit door issue.

Additionally, Duckworth [recently called on FAA to reject a petition](#) by Boeing for a safety exemption to allow the 737 MAX 7 to be certified to fly despite having *another* known safety defect that has not yet been fixed. The Senator also met with the Boeing’s

CEO and called on him to withdraw the company's decision, [which the company did just days later](#), crediting Duckworth's reasoning for the decision.