



Sen. Kirk strong supporter of St. Louis Regional Airport, passage of 2016 Transportation Bill

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Aviation and transportation have always tugged at the heart of U.S. Senator Mark Kirk's mission as a legislator and he supported passage of the Senate Appropriations Committee's bill of the fiscal year 2016 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development funding bill.

On Tuesday, he made an appearance at St. Louis Regional Airport in Bethalto to further show his commitment to the smaller airports in the region.

"The bill provides dedicated funding for the East Alton Contract Tower and strengthens FAA security so attacks like the one that occurred at the Aurora control center last year will never happen again on our watch," Sen. Kirk said. "This guarantees \$154.4 million for the federal Contract Tower Program, including the East Alton tower and five others in Illinois. This will make sure they never close because of a lack of money."

The Senate appropriations passage will also allow improvements to Illinois rail, highway, pipeline, and aviation infrastructure. The bill should also make sure there shouldn't be a repeat of what happened to the Air Route Traffic Control Center in Aurora, which caused the cancellation of nearly 2,000 flights in Chicago and disrupted aviation traffic across the country.

Kirk said St. Louis Regional Airport is an important economic engine to the Metro East with many jobs affiliated with West Star Aviation and the airport.

"We want to connect the Alton area with the rest of the nationwide economy and make sure the airports are open," he said. "I am a big ally of aviation in the Senate. Small airports play such a big role in people's lives."

These are highlights of the FY 2016 Transportation and Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act:

- Guarantees \$154.4 million for the federal Contract Tower Program, including the East Alton contract tower and five others in Illinois.
- Requires Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) facilities to ensure operations are restored immediately following incidents like the Aurora fire last September. The bill provides \$100.88 million for physical security and personnel improvements within the Office of Security and Hazardous Materials Safety (ASH).
- Includes new passenger safety grants for Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in wake of derailments.

- Supports the Chicago Transit Authority's (CTA) Red and Purple Line Modernization Project.
- Requires comparative analysis of shipping oil by rail, pipeline or truck in light of recent train derailments involving crude oil spills, including in Galena.
- Funds the Essential Air Service Program within the FAA, which supports airports in Decatur, Marion, Waukegan and Quincy.