

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 11, 2008

The Honorable Robert A. Sturgell
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
8000 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Acting Administrator Sturgell:

We write out of continued concern for FAA's safety regulation and management of the New Jersey-New York airspace. Recently some alarming reports have surfaced regarding the agency's alleged actions to silence air traffic controllers who have complained about the lack of published flight patterns at Newark Liberty International Airport. Since the so-called "dispersal headings" were put into effect last year, air traffic controllers have been asking for updated Standard Instrument Departures (SIDs) to be published. Not only has the FAA still failed to provide written procedures, but it now appears to be retaliating against its critics.

On a larger scale, the deteriorating relationship between FAA management and air traffic controllers is of grave concern. In the crowded metropolitan airspace, it is absolutely essential that we have a full staff of experienced, completely certified controllers. We ask that you take steps to begin to repair FAA's relationship with its safety professionals, including air traffic controllers. A cooperative partnership means a more efficient airspace and a safer public.

This is particularly urgent given the ongoing wave of retirements and overall lack of experienced controllers managing the planes in our skies. For example, we are aware of the FAA's difficulty in retaining developing controllers at Newark tower in particular.

We urge you to act before it is too late. The poisoned relationship between FAA management and its employees must not continue. The people of New Jersey deserve an FAA that can make our airports and skies over our communities as safe and efficient as possible.

Sincerely Yours,


ROBERT MENENDEZ
United States Senator


FRANK R. LAUTENBERG
United States Senator