

Departures

Opinions On Current Issues In Aviation

An Open Letter To President-Elect Obama

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Congratulations on your historic victory. As you know, international aviation serves as an important engine for the U.S. and global economy, responsible for 8% of U.S. gross domestic output and 11.4 million jobs. The International Air Transport Association is proud to represent 230 international airlines, including the large majority of network U.S. carriers, comprising 93% of scheduled international air traffic.

As you clearly outlined during the campaign, we need to focus on specific targets in order for the country to climb out of the current financial recession. Traveling by air – whether it is passengers or cargo – is crucial for the country's economic recovery. Airlines around the world are expected to lose billions of dollars this year, but there are several important unresolved problems you have the power to fix that will put the industry on the road to recovery.

I will start with the need for liberalization. Unlike other challenged industries affected by the global recession, airlines are not asking for special rules or bailouts. Rather, in order to build a sustainable future, airlines need the same management tools that other businesses take for granted: market access and access to capital. We are confident that government, airlines and labor can work together to remove these arcane restrictions and allow the industry to reach its full global potential.

IATA only a few weeks ago successfully concluded the Agenda for Freedom Summit. A total of 14 nations plus the European Commission attended the meeting in Istanbul, which focused on ways to further liberalize market access and ownership and control rules. The U.S. was an important contributor to this meeting, and we expect your administration will play a crucial role in the dialogue next year.

Another challenge to your administration in the early days is the security of the U.S. and other nations. Security and safety of aviation is our top priority. However, since Sept. 11, 2001, the aviation industry has spent \$5.9 billion on duplicative and unharmonized security mea-

asures.

It makes no sense to impose security requirements in the U.S. that directly conflict with those imposed by your major trading partners. Further, duplicative regulatory mandates from different parts of the U.S. Dept. of Homeland Security only serve to foster confusion and wasted resources. DHS in the past has not had a global perspective and missed an opportunity to take a leadership position to build consensus and harmonization. We hope that changes, starting in January.

As your campaign led you by plane across the U.S., you likely experienced air traffic delays somewhere along your journey. The answer to congestion and delays is modernization of the airspace and the air navigation infrastructure, not slot auctions and congestion pricing.

You also made the modernization of infrastructure a cornerstone of your campaign. Nowhere is this needed more than in aviation, where satellite-based navigation offers the near-term promise of increased capacity, decreased delays and safer skies. In 2007, the 15% increase in system delays led to more than \$8

billion in additional costs for U.S. passenger airlines.

You have also addressed the importance of energy resources and the environment. Global warming is a global challenge that requires global solutions. International aviation is not designed to navigate unilateral curbs on aviation emissions. Taxes and charges serve to reduce the ability of airlines to make the investments in new aircraft and technology needed to further minimize our global environmental footprint. Our common objective with governments should be to reduce emissions not charge for them. Positive economic measures, including a fair and global approach to emissions, trading under ICAO's leadership, are part of the strategy.

These are great challenges, but I'm convinced that the U.S. -- which was the driving force in building the aviation industry -- has the skills and resources to regain its traditional leadership position and ensure secure, profitable and environmentally friendly aviation.

*'Traveling by air...
is crucial for
the country's
economic
recovery'*

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