

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
BANKING, HOUSING, AND
URBAN AFFAIRS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

April 24, 2013

The Honorable Michael Huerta
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20591

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients
Acting Director
The Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Administrator Huerta and Director Zients:

I write to you today to address the substantial disruptions that could occur in the air transportation system due to decisions made by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Office of Management and Budget and the impact this would have on the economy of Las Vegas and the rest of Nevada. I appreciate the opportunity to address this with you both.

Air traffic controllers have begun to be furloughed and 149 contract air traffic control towers are scheduled to close on June 15, 2013. This unnecessary action will have a significant negative effect on travel to Nevada, especially Las Vegas.

It is my understanding that the FAA has the authority to find required savings elsewhere. For example, there are seven budget activities within the FAA's operations account for FY2013. While the overall percentage of cuts to the account must be the same percentage, the amount taken from each activity can fluctuate. Is it correct that, with a budget of nearly \$16 billion and mandated cuts of \$485 million from operations, the FAA can find \$160 million savings from the air traffic control furloughs elsewhere?

Before executing furloughs, did the FAA use all available flexibility to shift funding and make targeted cuts to lower priority Air Traffic Organizations (ATO) programs to reduce the impact felt by airspace users and the traveling public?

The past five years have been incredibly difficult on the economy of Nevada. The economic downturn led to thousands of jobs lost, a tremendous amount of foreclosed homes, and many leaving the state entirely. Nevada's fragile economy is just now starting to recover, bolstered by the increased travel and tourism to the state. While I have every confidence in the resolve of the people of Nevada, they should not be subject to political gamesmanship.

I did not vote for the Budget Control Act, which created sequestration. I firmly believe in doing so Congress abdicated its responsibilities, and I cannot stand by and allow Nevada's fragile economic recovery to be used as political pawns.

I request a response to this letter no later than April 26, 2013, so that I can further understand why these decisions are being made.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dean Heller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dean" and the last name "Heller" clearly distinguishable.

DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator