

Congressmen Call to Put 90,000 Workers Back on the Job by Reauthorizing the FAA

Ronkonkoma, NY — On Thursday, Rep. Steve Israel (NY-2), Rep. Tim Bishop (NY-1), Islip Town Supervisor Phil Nolan and Long Island MacArthur Airport Commissioner Teresa Rizzuto called for the end of the FAA shutdown and discussed the impact the shutdown is having locally.

“Once again House Republicans have gone too far. Now, they’ve grounded the FAA and left more than 90,000 workers stranded on the tarmac. It’s time for Congress to go back to work and put people back to work,” said Rep Israel. “It’s absurd that we just spent weeks negotiating over how to reduce our debt and now House Republicans are going to let us lose \$1 billion in tax revenue and keep 90,000 workers from gainful employment. I urge them to come to their senses and pass a straightforward FAA reauthorization.”

“It is unconscionable that House members left town without taking a simple vote that would put thousands of Americans back to work,” Bishop said. “Instead of standing outside MacArthur urging my colleagues to do the right thing, I’d much rather be boarding a flight to resolve this unnecessary standoff.”

The FAA capital program has been shutdown since July 23, resulting in a furlough of nearly 4,000 employees as well as an estimated 87,000 construction jobs because of stop-work orders on capital projects. New York State is losing \$62,600,000 in airport construction funding, 2,177 airport construction jobs and 127 FAA jobs. Several of the affected projects directly impact MacArthur Airport.

Supervisor Nolan said, “More than \$1.3 million in FAA-funded projects, representing more than 130 potential jobs, are on hold at MacArthur Airport and our historic airfield, the Bayport Aerodrome. Not only are these projects important to the continued improvement of these transportation facilities, but they represent economic activity that is vital to the region. We appreciate the support of Congressmen Israel and Bishop in advocating for the authorization of these funds.”

“It’s unconscionable that Congress would even consider adjourning without resolving an issue that impacts aviation across the nation. It’s unacceptable. Furthermore, the furlough of 4,000 FAA employees who have helped keep America flying is a travesty,” added Commissioner Rizzuto.

Israel and Bishop demanded that Congress come back in session to pass a clean extension of the FAA. The House has adjourned for the August district work period and is not presently scheduled to reconvene until September 7, 2011. Without action, the FAA shutdown will result in a loss of \$1.2 billion in tax revenue that would otherwise go towards aviation infrastructure.

“It remains incomprehensible to the aviation community, and the taxpayer, that the administrative functions of the FAA have been shut down due to partisan bickering in Washington,” said New York Aviation Management Association (NYAMA) President Carl Beardsley. “Aviation remains a core pillar of our nation’s economy and at a time when we need every tool to restart investment and confidence in America’s business community a full functioning FAA is nothing less than crucial. If the FAA shutdown doesn’t end immediately it will create a cascading effect on major capital projects that will damage our aviation infrastructure for years to come.”

Bishop and Israel also called on the major airlines to stop taking advantage of the situation. While the FAA is shutdown, it is no longer collecting taxes which normally go directly to a fund for airport construction projects. However, instead of passing these savings of anywhere from \$25-\$50 to travelers, some airlines have raised their ticket prices by an equal amount and are pocketing the money. The Congressmen demanded that airlines either return those funds directly to travelers or to the federal government to be used for aviation infrastructure.