



The Daily Dish

Shutdown-Proofing the FAA

DOUGLAS HOLTZ-EAKIN | DECEMBER 5, 2025

Remember the government shutdown? Remember 43 days of longing for all things federal government? No, no, not that. But Eakinomics does remember the five of those days consisting of DCA to IND to LAS to LAX to DCA. And during those days, Eakinomics does remember praying that enough of the air traffic controllers - part of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and working without pay - would show up each day to keep the planes on schedule. And Eakinomics remembers thinking that the shutdown was no longer about health insurance subsidies; it was about how long the planes stayed in the air.

Evidently Eakinomics is not alone, as there are now bills in both the House and Senate that would keep the FAA funded (at least in part) and the controllers paid in the event of a future shutdown. As laid out in Jordan Haring's new [paper](#), the House's [Aviation Funding Solvency Act \(H.R. 6086\)](#) and the Senate's [Aviation Funding Stability Act \(S. 1045\)](#) take slightly different approaches to reaching the same objective.

The House version would fund the activities of two FAA accounts - Operations, and Facilities and Equipment - using funding from the Aviation Insurance Revolving Fund. This fund usually covers war risk insurance claims by airlines and currently has a balance of about \$2.6 billion. The bill would allow use of the fund until there was a minimum of \$1 billion left and, if it wasn't sufficient for everything, would prioritize paying salaries over other uses of the fund.

The Senate version uses instead the Airport and Airway Trust Fund, which is funded by ticket taxes and currently has a balance of about \$20 billion. It would be used to fund four FAA accounts - Operations; Facilities and Equipment; Research, Engineering, and Development; and Grants-in-Aid for Airports.

In both cases, any funds used during the shutdown would be replenished by the subsequent

appropriations bill or continuing resolution.

The importance of funding the troops became evident by the Pentagon's Cirque-du-Soleil level budgetary gymnastics during the shutdown. The importance of funding the FAA became evident because worries about it ended the shutdown. These bills would take the latter threat off the table entirely.