The Daily Dish

Competent Governance

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A great deal is made of ideological swings among voters as an explanation for electoral results. But Eakinomics thinks that sometimes the electorate just wants somebody who can do the job. The policy errors that spawned and fed inflation will deservedly drive the election results in November. But there are other examples of underperformance as well.

Consider the rollout of 5G.

Recall that in January the public was suddenly warned that a nationwide rollout of the new wireless technology – 5G signals over C-band networks – could interfere with aircraft altimeters and cause jetliners to crash. A twitchy Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) cooked up a plan to ground thousands of flights, which would be – let's just say it – inconvenient. A stronger letter from the nation's airline executives warned of economic Armageddon: "To be blunt, the nation's commerce will grind to a halt."

Fortunately, an agreement was reached to not turn on hundreds of transmission towers near the runways of 87 airports and to reduce the power of others. That agreement runs out on July 5, and now Reuters is reporting: "[Acting FAA Administrator] Nolen urged airlines to urgently press ahead with retrofitting radio altimeters, saying 'there are no guarantees that all large markets will retain the current (safeguards).' He warned that as wireless carriers boost signals some 'less capable aircraft' may be unable to access certain airports without altimeter retrofits."

Welcome to a Happy Birthday America sh*tsh*w, uh, Shakespearean classic.

It is worth emphasizing that Eakinomics has no interest in picking sides. Rolling out 5G is a national priority. The safety of the flying public is a national priority. It is the job of the FAA, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), and especially the White House to provide both simultaneously. For two successive administrations, they are failing to do their job.

The Trump Administration zigzagged all over the 5G policy map, including a brief dalliance with a Department of Defense-led government 5G network, before the FCC auctioned off the C-band spectrum. The purchasers forked out tens of billions of dollars without a guarantee of any FCC-FAA resolution of potential interference or a provision to address the affected altimeters. The FAA sat by as the preparations for rollout progressed, despite increasingly panicked calls for safety provisions by its stakeholders. Performance review for the agencies: NSFW.