



## **AMAC Legislative Update January 10, 2018**

### **Congress Returns for 2nd Session with Key Deadlines for Transportation Looming**

Please mark your calendars and plan to join us here in Washington, D.C. for our annual Economic Opportunity & Policy Forum on March 20th - 21st. As we embark upon what is sure to be up to be an exciting new year of economic growth and opportunity for minority businesses, let us not lose sight of the fact that our voices are needed now more than ever in the public policy arena. As evidenced by the sweeping tax legislation signed into law last year, public policy making that occurs here in our nation's capital impacts every facet of our personal and professional lives. So again, mark your calendars and plan to join us as we engage with a wide array of elected officials and government stakeholders on policies that further promote the full participation of minority and women-owned businesses in airport contracting and employment.

In addition to flagging the Economic Opportunity & Policy Forum for your situational awareness, I would also like to provide a brief legislative update. Congress returns to work this week with a jammed packed agenda for consideration. AMAC's Government Affairs Committee is closely monitoring developments of interest to our industry sector - most notably: developments surrounding the reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the federal transportation appropriations bills. Captured below are a few highlights to bring you up to speed on these critical pieces of legislation we are actively engaged on:

#### **FAA Reauthorization**

The FAA is operating on a short-term extension of its authorization, which is set to expire on March 31. Both House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster (R-PA) and Senate Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune (R-SD) have voiced concerns with settling for another short-term FAA extension like the one passed in September. "March 31 is one way or the other: extension, which I don't like, or we do something. But look, I'm not giving up anything right now," Shuster said.

#### **Senate**

The Senate's FAA bill has been hampered by Chairman Thune's provision easing the 1,500-hour requirement for air transport pilots. Thune's provision is intended to create flexibility in how pilots earn training hours. The language would loosen the federally mandated 1,500 flight hour minimum for commercial airline co-pilots to allow other forms of non-flight training. The 1,500-hour rule resulted from the deadly 2009 Colgan Air crash in New York. The proposal to change that rule has generated enough opposition to stall the bill's progress since it was approved in committee in June. Opponents include Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer.

Thune has indicated recently that he is open to dropping the contentious pilot-training provision from the bill so the measure can move to the floor for debate and a vote in the new year. "It may be that the bill is not the best place to get that addressed, if we can get that addressed in



another form,” Thune said. “If we feel like we’re making sufficient headway on the 1,500 hours or at least on the pilot shortage issue in some other venue then we might be able to just start moving our bill.”

### **House**

The inclusion of Chairman Shuster’s controversial language to privatize air traffic control continues to be the most serious impediment to passing a reauthorization bill in the House. However, Shuster, who has also announced that he will retire after his term expires in 2018, said recently that infrastructure legislation could overtake his proposal to spin off air traffic control from the FAA as a priority in 2018. Shuster said any infrastructure bill will need broad bipartisan support and that it would be a “game-day decision” if his air traffic control proposal would be included. “I want to bring votes to the table. I don’t want to take them,” Shuster said. Shuster’s ATC proposal faces strong Democratic opposition and hasn’t had enough Republican votes bring the bill to the floor.

### **THUD Appropriations**

The federal government continues to operate under FY17 levels as a result of another continuing resolution, which expires on January 19. Negotiations have been complicated by the need to reach an agreement on spending increases, as a result of Budget Control Act restrictions. The inability to raise the spending caps makes passage of an FY18 omnibus unlikely in the short-term. As such, we can likely expect another continuing resolution and no significant action on FY18 appropriations.

### **House**

The House had previously passed a 12-bill omnibus appropriations package (HR.3354) in September, but there was no corresponding Senate action. House THUD appropriations for FY18 (HR.3353) included \$17.87 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Department of Transportation.

### **Senate**

Senate appropriators passed their transportation bill (S.1655) out of committee in July, but it has received no floor consideration. The Senate version included \$19.47 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Department of Transportation, prevents privatization of ATC functions, increases the airport Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) cap to \$8.50, and increases AIP funding to \$3.6 billion.

AMAC will continue to actively engage policymakers, in addition to the new Administration, on AMAC priorities. We will keep you apprised of emerging developments and actions that you as an AMAC member can undertake to make a difference.

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