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# [Government shutdown impacts U.S. airline industry](https://www.freightwaves.com/news/federal-regulation/government-shutdown-impacts-airline-industry)

[January 14, 2019](https://www.freightwaves.com/news/federal-regulation/government-shutdown-impacts-airline-industry) [Henry Carmichael](https://www.freightwaves.com/news?author=5c3f8e23b8a045ac2accc82a)

Because of the now record-breaking partial government shutdown, the U.S. aviation industry is beginning to feel the consequences of lapsed federal funding.

A coalition of 34 aviation industry groups ranging from the [Air Line Pilots Association](http://www.alpa.org/) to the U.S. Travel Association sent a letter to President Trump and congressional leaders, urging an end to the longest government shutdown.

In part, the letter states, "This partial shutdown has already inflicted real damage to our nation’s aviation system and the impacts will only worsen over time. We urge you to act quickly to resolve these issues.'' The letter highlights 11 major areas of concern affecting travel.

The [Airports Council International](https://aci.aero/) (ACI) was one of the 34 groups signing the letter. ACI had previously reached out to the President regarding the shutdown.

“Federal staffing and other resource shortfalls brought on by this shutdown threaten existing and new air service to communities across the country, harming air travelers, businesses, and regional economies all over America,” ACI’s earlier letter said. “A true national crisis would develop if we cripple the U.S. aviation system in this manner.”

Two unions for flight attendants, the [Association of Flight Attendants-CW](https://www.afacwa.org/), AFL-CIO and the [Association of Professional Flight Attendants](https://www.apfa.org/), echoed the concerns in their own appeal to the government. It said its members and the traveling public are "less safe and secure'' due to the impact of the shutdown.

The greatest impact that the [Federal Aviation Administration](https://www.faa.gov/) (FAA) is facing from the shutdown comes from a slowdown in hiring new workers. While the 25,000 air traffic controllers are exempt from furloughs, training for new controllers has been suspended, which may  lead to a shortage of controllers. Additionally, new pilot training certifications have stopped at a time when commercial airline pilots are in short supply.

At the same time, airports have seen longer lines stemming from [Transportation Safety Administration](https://www.tsa.gov/) (TSA) workers calling in “sick” due to not being paid. The situation is powerful enough to impact the overall functionality of major U.S. airports. For example, [Miami International’s](http://www.miami-airport.com/) (MIA) spokesman Greg Chin announced that one of its terminals would be partially closed over the weekend.

“Due to an increased number of TSA screeners not reporting to work, we decided to take this precautionary step and relocate about 12 flights to adjoining concourses in the afternoons,” said Chin, responding to concerns that not enough screeners would be available to manage MIA’s 11 checkpoints.

U.S. air carriers are also facing the impact of 4,000 FAA inspectors being furloughed by the shutdown. Southwest Airlines [(LUV: NYSE)](https://www.barchart.com/stocks/quotes/LUV) planned to begin flights from four California cities to four cities in Hawaii in the spring, a first for the airline. However, Southwest’s Boeing [(BA: NYSE)](https://www.barchart.com/stocks/quotes/BA) 737 aircraft require Extended-range Twin-engine Operational Performance Standards (ETOPS), a rule which permits twin-engine aircraft to fly routes on only one engine for a period of time from the nearest airport suitable for emergency landing (or in this case, over expansive bodies of water). CEO Gary Kelly sent a letter to employees saying the shutdown will likely delay plans for the company to begin flights.

Meanwhile, Delta Air Lines [(DAL: NYSE)](https://www.barchart.com/stocks/quotes/DAL) is planning to commence operations with its newest aircraft on January 31. The Canadian-designed A220 (formerly Bombardier [(BBD-TSX)](https://www.barchart.com/stocks/quotes/BBD-B.TO) C-Series) is being marketed to U.S. airlines by aviation giant Airbus with Delta as its launch customer. The C-Series is an advanced small, long-range jet designed to capture the market for flying to small airports across the U.S. Unfortunately for Delta, it cannot put these planes into commercial operation without the approval of furloughed FAA inspectors.

A proposed solution to aviation industry uncertainty that has been brought forward previously (and given new life by the shutdown) is to privatize the FAA. Lawmakers have suggested moving air traffic controllers out of federal authority to a non-for-profit entity that would be overseen by industry members. This would theoretically insulate the FAA from government inefficiencies and allow the agency to change with the economy.

“Many other industrialized countries have separated their air traffic control functions from government,” a White House’s budget fact sheet reported. “There, air traffic service providers work with private capital markets to modernize technology and facilities in a more iterative way that focuses on driving stakeholder benefits. It is time for the United States to follow suit.”

If the government shutdown persists, a true point of pressure for the FAA could come on February 3, when an influx of corporate jets and private planes descend on Atlanta for Super Bowl LIII.