



February 3, 2012

Dear Rep./Senator:

This week, House and Senate members met in conference to reach agreement on the long overdue FAA reauthorization bill. Instead of making the hard choices by cutting wasteful programs, the conferees expanded the funding available for the Essential Air Service (EAS) program — a policy relic that has long outlived its original intent — and sold it as a 'cut.' This is nothing but more budgetary smoke and mirrors. Instead of being expanded, EAS should be eliminated for the lower 48 states.

The EAS program was created over 30 years ago to serve as a transition for communities after airline deregulation. The program was supposed to be temporary, but the number of flights and cities receiving EAS subsidies has grown to serve parochial interests of lawmakers, not the transportation needs of the country. Subsidizing flights that serve a select few per day yet cost all taxpayers hundreds of dollars per flight does not make fiscal sense. Though the program appears to be a cut under the agreement reached by the conference committee, certain aviation fees that are mandated to support the EAS program are set to go up dramatically. This will cost taxpayers even more money that is already spent on the program, mitigating any so-called 'cut' in discretionary funds found in the conference bill.

We believe the EAS program should be eliminated in the lower 48 states, saving taxpayers up to \$816 million over the next five years. As we deal with a \$15 trillion debt, it's time for members of Congress to take a hard look what really makes a program 'essential' and this starts with grounding the non-Essential Air Service program. As this conference bill comes up for debate in your chamber, Taxpayers for Common Sense Action urges you to turn the bill around, cut EAS, and ground the program once and for all.

If you would like additional information, please contact me or Erich Zimmermann in my office at (202) 546-8500.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Ryan Alexander', is written above the typed name.

Ryan Alexander
President