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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. BRAT).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
September 26, 2017.

I hereby appoint the Honorable DAVE BRAT to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

PAUL D. RYAN,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2017, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties. All time shall be equally allocated between the parties, and in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m. Each Member, other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip, shall be limited to 5 minutes.

DON'T PRIVATIZE AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFazio) for 5 minutes.

Mr. DEFazio. Mr. Speaker, yesterday, a temporary extension of the absolutely crucial Federal Aviation Administration—which runs our air traffic control system in the United States of America; the largest, most complex, and safest system in the world—failed. It actually will expire on October 1. That means that the source of funding for air traffic goes away and air traffic controllers may be working without salaries.

Now, why are we here?

We are here because the chairman of the committee insists that we must privatize the air traffic control of the United States, the largest, most complex, safest, most advanced system in the world, to make it even better. Unfortunately, he does not enjoy support adequate to get this bill through. He delayed the bill in the last Congress because he didn't have the votes, and the bill has been delayed multiple times in this Congress. It has bipartisan opposition, and the Senate isn't even thinking about this.

Now, why are we here?

Well, the airlines have this fake group they call the Citizens for On Time Flights. And they say we have to fly old zigzag patterns across the United States with World War II radar. Well, that would be really bad if it were true. However, it is a lie.

In fact, we have direct routes, performance-based navigation. Actually, the government has built and deployed a functional system where we can fly every plane in America by GPS. But the airlines haven't wanted to make the investment in their planes. So, actually, they are making a case against themselves.

Why aren't we using the system more efficiently?

Because they have failed to purchase the equipment to fly planes closer together. If every plane doesn't have GPS, we can't fly them closer together because the air traffic controllers won't know exactly where they are.

Now, they say: Well, if we get to run the system, it will be more efficient. It is ATC that is the problem.

Well, here is June: In June, actually, airline operations, overscheduling, crew dispatch, mechanicals, the host of things that they have, caused 46 percent of the delays.

And then they go on to say: Well, this is horrible, these delays. It costs Americans \$20 billion a year.

If that is true, then the airlines are costing American consumers \$11.5 billion a year because they themselves won't clean up their acts.

Again, they go on about ATO. How many times have their dispatch and reservation systems crashed in the last 5 years?

Dozens of times, stranding millions of people.

How many times has the entire ATC in the United States of America gone down?

Zero. Zero times.

So we should let them run it? They will run it better, just like their computer reservation and their dispatch systems?

Come on. There is really just a very simple agenda here. We finance the current Air Traffic Organization with a 7.5 percent tax on every ticket—a progressive tax. The more expensive your ticket, the more you pay. That pays for about 75 percent of the system today.

The bill that the chairman wants to push will repeal the ticket tax. Airlines will raise prices 7.5 percent. So everybody will still pay the same amount for their tickets.

How do I know that?

Because this tax temporarily lapsed 5 years ago and every airline in America, except for Spirit and Alaska, immediately raised ticket prices 7.5 percent.

So then how are we going to pay for the system?

Well, actually, they are going to impose a new head tax. That is right. You get on the plane and you will pay a new head tax to use the airspace of the United States of America.

Now, that, of course, is a flat fee. So if you have a \$100 ticket, 25 percent tax, \$25 to sit in that seat. If you have a \$3,000 ticket, well, you are going to pay a tiny fraction. It won't bother you very much at all. So we are going to go from a fair, progressive tax that finances the system to a flat head tax.

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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