

PRESS RELEASE,
From the office of Congressman Jerry Costello, IL

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COSTELLO: FAA ON "AUTOPILOT"

Washington - U.S. Congressman Jerry F. Costello (D-IL), Chairman of the House Aviation Subcommittee, today blasted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for its inattention to safety oversight during a full House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing into revelations that the FAA and Southwest Airlines were negligent in completing regular airplane inspections. Costello also called for a thorough accounting from the FAA as to who knew what and when regarding the Southwest violations. The violations were revealed after an investigation by the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

"You know it is a sad day when employees of any agency have to seek whistleblower protections in order to do their job – let alone safety inspectors from an agency whose number one responsibility is protecting the flying public....While Southwest's failure is inexcusable, the fact that FAA supervisors prevented FAA inspectors from doing their job – prevented them from enforcing serious safety violations - is outrageous. We need to know who at the FAA knew about these violations; when they learned about the violations; and why the FAA waited so long to impose a fine on Southwest so that action can be taken."

Costello went on to say that in his experience the FAA has shown itself to be, across a variety of issues, a reactive agency, not a proactive one.

"The FAA seems to be on autopilot until pushed into action by this Committee, the Aviation Subcommittee or the media. I have seen it in the areas of runway safety, hazardous conditions at towers and air traffic control activities, congestion and delays and consumer issues like holiday travel and emergency contingency plans. It is not enough to have safety regulations in place. The FAA must enforce those regulations. While the US has the safest air transportation system in the world, we cannot become complacent and rely on our past success."

Costello said further that the Aviation Subcommittee will continue its role of aggressive oversight of the FAA.

Flood insurance legislation has not yet been considered in the Senate. A final version of the bill can be crafted after Senate passage.

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