

UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
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FOR RELEASE OR DELIVERY  
EXPECTED TUESDAY MORNING  
JUNE 26, 1979

STATEMENT OF  
HENRY ESCHWEGE, DIRECTOR  
COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

BEFORE THE  
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE  
ON  
[ BENEFITS FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS AND OTHERS ]

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

WE ARE HERE TODAY TO DISCUSS OUR JUNE 1978, REPORT ENTITLED "SECOND CAREER TRAINING FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS SHOULD BE DISCONTINUED" (CED-78-131) AND TO PROVIDE OUR COMMENTS ON SEVERAL BILLS BEFORE THIS SUBCOMMITTEE WHICH WOULD AMEND PUBLIC LAW 92-297.

PUBLIC LAW 92-297 ESTABLISHED A SECOND CAREER PROGRAM TO HELP AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS EMPLOYED BY THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION (FAA) TO BEGIN A NEW CAREER ONCE THEY ARE REMOVED FROM DUTY FOR MEDICAL REASONS OR LOSS OF TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY. THIS PROGRAM WAS ENACTED BECAUSE OF THE LIMITED OPPORTUNITIES THAT EXISTED OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT FOR THE SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE OF CONTROLLERS. THIS LAW ALSO MADE CONTROLLERS ELIGIBLE FOR RETIREMENT EARLIER THAN MOST OTHER FEDERAL EMPLOYEES.



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*Testimony*  
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LIMITED USE AND SUCCESS  
OF THE SECOND CAREER PROGRAM

WE REPORTED THAT FEW CONTROLLERS HAD USED THE PROGRAM TO ENTER SECOND CAREERS. FROM PROGRAM INCEPTION THROUGH JUNE 30, 1977, 1,276 OF THE 2,580 CONTROLLERS ELIGIBLE FOR SECOND-CAREER TRAINING, OR 49 PERCENT, EITHER DECLINED OR WITHDREW FROM TRAINING. IN THE THREE FAA REGIONS REVIEWED, WE ESTIMATED THAT ONLY 7 PERCENT (90) OF THE 1,323 ELIGIBLE CONTROLLERS WOULD USE THE PROGRAM TO EMBARK ON A SECOND CAREER.

THE FOLLOWING THREE FACTORS CONTRIBUTED TO THE PROGRAM'S LIMITED USE.

--ABOUT 98 PERCENT OF THE CONTROLLERS REMOVED FROM DUTY HAD MENTAL AND PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENTS; MANY WERE ALSO THE VICTIMS OF ADVANCING AGE.

--RATHER THAN BEGIN A SECOND CAREER, MOST CONTROLLERS CHOSE TO USE THE INCOME SECURITY AND TRAINING BENEFITS AVAILABLE UNDER OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS SUCH AS FEDERAL WORKERS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION AVAILABLE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR OR CIVIL SERVICE DISABILITY RETIREMENT.

--CONTROLLERS WERE NOT ADEQUATELY COUNSELED BY FAA, AND NO APPRECIABLE EFFORT WAS MADE BY FAA TO FIND CONTROLLERS EMPLOYMENT WITHIN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

ALTHOUGH WE RECOGNIZED THAT FAA COULD IMPROVE PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION, WE QUESTIONED WHETHER SUCH IMPROVEMENTS WOULD NOTICEABLY INCREASE THE PROGRAM'S SUCCESS. WE CONCLUDED THAT THE CONTROLLERS' HEALTH AND AGE, AS WELL AS PREFERENCES FOR LONG-TERM INCOME SECURITY AND TRAINING BENEFITS AVAILABLE FROM OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS PROVIDED FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES TO INCREASING THE PROGRAM'S EFFECTIVENESS. BECAUSE ABOUT 98 PERCENT OF THE CONTROLLERS COULD HAVE THEIR NEEDS MET BY OTHER BENEFIT PROGRAMS AVAILABLE TO FEDERAL WORKERS, WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE CONGRESS DISCONTINUE THE SECOND CAREER PROGRAM.

#### RESPONSE TO REPORT

IN RESPONSE TO OUR REPORT AND AN INVESTIGATION BY THE STAFF OF THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, THE CONGRESS PRECLUDED FAA FROM USING ANY OF ITS APPROPRIATED FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1979 FOR NEW ENTRANTS TO THE SECOND CAREER TRAINING PROGRAM. THE CONGRESS ALSO DIRECTED FAA TO RE-EVALUATE THE TRAINING PROGRAM AND TO RECOMMEND PROGRAM CHANGES.

IN ITS MARCH 1979 REPORT ON THE REEVALUATION OF THE SECOND CAREER PROGRAM, FAA CONSIDERED SEVERAL ALTERNATIVES FOR CHANGING THE PROGRAM BUT CONCLUDED THAT THE PROGRAM SHOULD BE DISCONTINUED. IT BELIEVED OTHER FEDERAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS WERE ADEQUATE TO COMPENSATE CONTROLLERS REMOVED FROM DUTY.

TURNING NOW TO THE FOUR BILLS BEFORE THIS SUBCOMMITTEE  
--HOUSE BILLS 1262, 1781, 3479, and 3503--I WOULD LIKE TO  
PROVIDE SOME COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS.

HOUSE BILL 3479

H.R. 3479 WOULD ESTABLISH WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION A TRAINING PROGRAM BOARD OF REVIEW TO RULE ON WHETHER THE CONTROLLERS' PROPOSED TRAINING PROGRAM AND OBJECTIVES MEET REASONABLE STANDARDS FOR SUCCESSFUL TRAINING COMPLETION AND JOB PLACEMENT. THE BILL WOULD REQUIRE CONTROLLERS TO BE CERTIFIED BY A PHYSICIAN CHOSEN BY THE CONTROLLER AS MEDICALLY FIT TO ENTER AND COMPLETE A TRAINING PROGRAM. THE BILL WOULD PRECLUDE CONTROLLERS FROM OBTAINING SECOND CAREER PROGRAM BENEFITS UNLESS THE BOARD OF REVIEW APPROVED THE CONTROLLERS' TRAINING OBJECTIVES. PROVISION IS MADE FOR SUBMITTING ALTERNATIVE PROPOSALS TO THE BOARD SHOULD THE CONTROLLERS' INITIAL PROPOSAL BE REJECTED.

THE BILL SHOULD HELP ELIMINATE SOME OF THE SHORTCOMINGS IN THE SECOND CAREER PROGRAM. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT OTHER FEDERAL BENEFIT PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE TO ACCOMPLISH THE INTENT OF THE SECOND CAREER PROGRAM, AND WE THEREFORE SEE NO NEED FOR ITS CONTINUANCE. SHOULD THE CONGRESS CONTINUE THE PROGRAM, WE BELIEVE HOUSE BILL 3479 NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED.

ALTHOUGH THE FEDERAL AIR SURGEON MUST CONCUR IN A CONTROLLER'S REMOVAL FROM DUTY, THE BILL DOES NOT REQUIRE THE FEDERAL AIR SURGEON TO CONCUR IN A CONTROLLER'S MEDICAL FITNESS TO UNDERGO TRAINING. ABOUT 98 PERCENT OF THE CONTROLLERS ELIGIBLE FOR SECOND CAREER TRAINING WERE REMOVED FROM DUTY FOR MEDICAL REASONS. IN OUR SAMPLE 44 PERCENT OF THE CONTROLLERS WITHDREW FROM TRAINING FOR HEALTH REASONS. ANOTHER SEVEN PERCENT DIED WHILE IN TRAINING. IN ADDITION ABOUT 59 PERCENT OF THOSE CONTROLLERS IN OUR SAMPLE THAT HAD WITHDRAWN FROM TRAINING AND WERE RECEIVING FEDERAL WORKERS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION BENEFITS, WERE DETERMINED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR TO HAVE NO REHABILITATIVE POTENTIAL. WE BELIEVE THE MEDICAL OPINION OF THE FEDERAL AIR SURGEON ALONG WITH THE OPINION OF A PHYSICIAN CHOSEN BY THE CONTROLLER, WOULD STRENGTHEN THE DETERMINATION PROCESS.

ALSO, WE BELIEVE CONTROLLERS WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE OF A PROFESSIONAL VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR IN DEVELOPING A TRAINING PROPOSAL FOR SUBMISSION TO THE BOARD OF REVIEW. SUCH COUNSELING COULD HELP CONTROLLERS TO CHOOSE CAREERS WHICH ARE COMPATIBLE WITH THEIR INTEREST, EXPERIENCE, AND ABILITIES AND WITH AVAILABLE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES.

H.R. 3479 SHOULD BE REVISED TO REQUIRE FOR EACH TRAINING PROPOSAL TO BE SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD, A JOINT REPORT FROM THE FEDERAL AIR SURGEON AND A QUALIFIED FAA VOCATIONAL COUNSELOR ON:

--THE TYPES OF TRAINING AND CAREERS THE CONTROLLER IS  
MEDICALLY FIT TO UNDERTAKE,  
--EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN EACH OF THESE CAREERS,  
--THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF COUNSELING PROVIDED THE  
CONTROLLER, AND  
--ANY COMMENTS ON THE TRAINING OBJECTIVES PROPOSED BY  
THE CONTROLLER.

SUCH A REPORT COULD HELP THE BOARD OF REVIEW TO RULE ON  
THE PROPOSED TRAINING PROGRAM, PROVIDE ADVICE TO THE CON-  
TROLLERS SHOULD THEIR PROPOSALS BE REJECTED, AND POSSIBLY  
EXPEDITE THE BOARD'S ACTIONS ON BOTH MATTERS.

ALSO WE SUGGEST THAT, TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, THE SECOND  
CAREER TRAINING SHOULD BE GEARED TOWARD REEMPLOYMENT WITH FAA  
OR ELSEWHERE IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. FAA HAS SEVERAL  
POSITIONS, SUCH AS FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SPECIALISTS, WHERE  
THE CONTROLLERS' KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE COULD PROVE USEFUL  
AND WHICH PROVIDE LESS DEMANDING WORKING CONDITIONS. IN  
IN ADDITION, OTHER FEDERAL AGENCIES PROVIDE A WIDE RANGE OF  
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES. REASSIGNMENT WITHIN FAA OR RE-  
EMPLOYMENT WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

--WOULD PROVIDE GREATER ASSURANCE THAT CONTROLLERS ARE  
REEMPLOYED IN A SECOND CAREER, AND  
--COULD REDUCE FEDERAL TRAINING AND COMPENSATION COST.

AS NOTED IN OUR JUNE 1978 REPORT, HOWEVER, MANY CONTROLLERS WERE UNWILLING TO ACCEPT REASSIGNMENTS AT REDUCED EARNINGS AND THE RESULTING LOSS OF THEIR DISABILITY RETIREMENT BENEFITS.

IN A NOVEMBER 1976 REPORT ON "CIVIL SERVICE DISABILITY RETIREMENT: NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS" (FPCD-76-61), WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE CONGRESS REEVALUATE THE CIVIL SERVICE DISABILITY RETIREMENT PROVISIONS AND ENACT LEGISLATION THAT WOULD ENCOURAGE RETENTION OF POTENTIALLY PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYEES. WE ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT ANY NEW LEGISLATION ENACTED SHOULD, (1) REQUIRE FEDERAL AGENCIES, EXCEPT FOR COMPELLING REASONS, TO REASSIGN EMPLOYEES TO VACANT POSITIONS WITHIN THE SAME OCCUPATIONAL CLASS WHEN THE EMPLOYEE IS ABLE TO DO THAT JOB, AND (2) PROVIDE APPROPRIATE INCENTIVES, SUCH AS SAVED PAY, FOR EMPLOYEES REASSIGNED TO LOWER GRADED POSITIONS.

PUBLIC LAW 92-297 RECOGNIZED THAT CONTROLLERS MAY BE REASSIGNED WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION OR REEMPLOYED ELSEWHERE IN THE FEDERAL SECTOR. THESE PROVISIONS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED TO PROVIDE THAT THE HIGHEST PRIORITY BE GIVEN TO TRAINING AND REEMPLOYMENT IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

WHETHER TRAINING IS GEARED TOWARD THE PRIVATE OR FEDERAL SECTOR, JOB PLACEMENT IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT FOR ANY SUCCESSFUL RETRAINING PROGRAM OF THIS NATURE. HOWEVER, WE NOTED IN OUR JUNE 1978 REPORT THAT FAA HAD NOT PROVIDED ANY PLACEMENT OR POSTPLACEMENT COUNSELING SERVICES. H.R. 3479 SHOULD BE

REVISED TO ASSURE THAT JOB PLACEMENT SERVICES WILL BE PROVIDED.

TO ENCOURAGE CONTROLLERS TO COMPLETE SECOND CAREER TRAINING, H.R. 3479 WOULD MAKE THE CONTROLLERS' COMPENSATION DURING TRAINING NONTAXABLE. COMPENSATION IS MADE AT THE FULL SALARY RATE FOR UP TO 2 YEARS. IN ADDITION, IT WOULD REQUIRE THAT A MONETARY VALUE BE ASSIGNED TO THE SKILL ACQUIRED IN THE SECOND CAREER PROGRAM FOR THE PURPOSE OF COMPUTING FEDERAL WORKERS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION BENEFITS. WE RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO ENCOURAGE CONTROLLERS TO COMPLETE THEIR SECOND CAREER TRAINING BUT DOUBT THAT THESE CHANGES WILL SUFFICE.

WE QUESTION WHETHER SECOND CAREER BENEFITS--PERMITTING THE PAYMENT OF FULL SALARY, TAX FREE--NEED TO BE GREATER THAN FEDERAL WORKERS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION BENEFITS, WHICH ARE ALSO TAX FREE BUT ARE LIMITED TO NO MORE THAN 75 PERCENT OF SALARY. CONTROLLERS WHO MAY NOT BE MEDICALLY FIT FOR SECOND CAREER TRAINING WOULD BE FINANCIALLY DISADVANTAGED WHEN COMPARED TO THOSE WHO RECEIVE TRAINING.

H.R. 3479 IS SILENT AS TO WHETHER SECOND CAREER TRAINING MUST BE COMPLETED IN ORDER FOR IT TO BE CONSIDERED A MARKETABLE SKILL IN COMPUTING WORKERS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION BENEFITS. IF SUCH CONSIDERATION IS NOT TO BE GIVEN TO SECOND CAREER TRAINING UNLESS COMPLETED, THEN THERE WOULD BE NO PENALTY FOR CONTROLLERS WITHDRAWING FROM TRAINING SHORT OF COMPLETION TO ACCEPT WORKERS' COMPENSATION BENEFITS; AN ACTION

THAT COULD CERTAINLY BE BENEFICIAL TO THE CONTROLLER  
IN THE LONG RUN.

HOUSE BILLS 3503, 1262 AND 1781

PUBLIC LAW 92-297 ALSO MADE CONTROLLERS ELIGIBLE FOR RETIREMENT BENEFITS EARLIER THAN IS GENERALLY AVAILABLE TO MOST OTHER FEDERAL EMPLOYEES. MOST FEDERAL EMPLOYEES SEPARATED FROM SERVICE ARE ENTITLED TO A RETIREMENT ANNUITY AFTER 30 YEARS' SERVICE AT AGE 55, 20 YEARS SERVICE AT AGE 60, OR 5 YEARS SERVICE AT AGE 62. HOWEVER UNDER PUBLIC LAW 92-297, CONTROLLERS CAN RETIRE AT AGE 50 IF THEY HAVE COMPLETED 20 YEARS OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SERVICE OR IF THEY COMPLETED 25 YEARS OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL SERVICE, REGARDLESS OF AGE. ANNUITIES UNDER EARLY RETIREMENT ARE COMPUTED THE SAME AS FOR OTHER FEDERAL EMPLOYEES EXCEPT CONTROLLERS ARE ASSURED AT LEAST 50 PERCENT OF THEIR AVERAGE PAY.

EARLY RETIREMENT WAS EXTENDED TO CONTROLLERS TO HELP MAINTAIN A YOUNG, VIGOROUS WORKFORCE. THE 50 PERCENT MINIMUM ANNUITY WAS INTENDED AS AN ECONOMIC INCENTIVE FOR CONTROLLERS TO RETIRE EARLY. TO ILLUSTRATE, AFTER 20 YEARS, THE REGULAR RETIREMENT FORMULA PROVIDES 36.25 PERCENT OF AVERAGE PAY AND AFTER 25 YEARS, 46.25 PERCENT. A BENEFIT OF 50 PERCENT OF AVERAGE PAY IS AVAILABLE ONLY AFTER ABOUT 27 YEARS OF SERVICE UNDER REGULAR RETIREMENT.

HOUSE BILLS 1262, 1781, AND 3503 WOULD EXTEND THE EARLY RETIREMENT PROVISIONS OF PUBLIC LAW 92-297 TO ADDITIONAL FEDERAL EMPLOYEE GROUPS--EITHER FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SPECIALISTS AND/OR CERTAIN CIVILIAN EMPLOYEES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE ENGAGED IN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL, FLIGHT SERVICES OR BOTH.

IN OUR DECEMBER 1978 REPORT ON "NEED FOR OVERALL POLICY AND COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF FEDERAL RETIREMENT SYSTEMS" (FPCD-78-49) WE CONCLUDED THAT THE LACK OF AN OVERALL FEDERAL RETIREMENT POLICY AND INDEPENDENT, PIECEMEAL DEVELOPMENT HAVE RESULTED IN A PATCHWORK OF SYSTEMS PROVIDING DIFFERENT BENEFITS UNDER DIFFERENT CONDITIONS TO VARIOUS EMPLOYEE GROUPS.

THIS REPORT DISCUSSED HOW THE VARIOUS RETIREMENT SYSTEMS DIFFER IN MANY RESPECTS AND HOW COVERED PERSONNEL ARE TREATED QUITE DIFFERENTLY DEPENDING UPON THE RETIREMENT PROVISIONS THAT APPLY TO THEIR EMPLOYMENT. THE SPECIAL EARLY RETIREMENT PROVISION FOR CONTROLLERS IS ONLY ONE OF MANY IN WHICH PREFERENTIAL BENEFITS HAVE BEEN GRANTED TO PARTICULAR EMPLOYEE GROUPS. WE CONCLUDED THAT SOME OF THE SPECIAL PROVISIONS MIGHT BE JUSTIFIED BUT THAT, IN MOST CASES, IT WAS DIFFICULT TO CLEARLY IDENTIFY ANY CURRENT MANAGEMENT OR COMPENSATION POLICIES THAT ARE BEING SERVED BY THE SYSTEMS AS THEY ARE NOW DESIGNED. IN THE CASE OF THE CONTROLLERS, FOR EXAMPLE, WE NOTED THAT MOST CONTROLLERS DO NOT RETIRE EARLY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE MORE LIBERAL BENEFITS. IN FISCAL YEAR 1978, RETIRING CONTROLLERS, ON THE AVERAGE, WERE 55.4 YEARS

YEARS OLD AND HAD COMPLETED 30.2 YEARS OF SERVICE AND, THEREFORE, WERE ELIGIBLE TO RETIRE UNDER THE SYSTEM'S REGULAR RETIREMENT PROVISIONS.

BECAUSE OF THE MANY INCONSISTENCIES AND INEQUITIES FOUND TO EXIST IN FEDERAL RETIREMENT SYSTEMS, WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE CONGRESS ESTABLISH A RETIREMENT POLICY OUTLINING THE PRINCIPLES, OBJECTIVES AND STANDARDS TO BE FOLLOWED IN PROVIDING RETIREMENT BENEFITS TO FEDERAL PERSONNEL. WE RECOMMENDED THAT THE POLICY SHOULD SERVE BOTH MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE NEEDS AND, WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT SPECIAL PROVISIONS MAY BE JUSTIFIED FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS, THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE SHOULD BE THAT ALL FEDERAL PERSONNEL SHOULD RECEIVE CONSISTENT BENEFITS.

BASED ON THE FINDINGS IN OUR DECEMBER 1978 REPORT, WE BELIEVE THE CONGRESS SHOULD BE VERY HESITANT TO GRANT PREFERENTIAL RETIREMENT PROVISIONS TO ADDITIONAL GROUPS OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES UNTIL IT ESTABLISHES A POLICY AS TO JUST WHAT LEVEL OF BENEFITS FEDERAL RETIREMENT SYSTEMS SHOULD PROVIDE. AS A MINIMUM, A THOROUGH ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING AND PROPOSED EARLY RETIREMENT PROVISIONS SHOULD BE MADE BEFORE ADDING OTHER GROUPS.

ALSO, WE QUESTION THE NEED TO EXTEND EARLY RETIREMENT (HOUSE BILLS 1262 AND 3503) OR SECOND CAREER BENEFITS (H.R. 1262) TO FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SPECIALISTS. BASIC, MAJOR DIFFERENCES EXIST BETWEEN THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS AND FLIGHT SERVICE

STATION SPECIALISTS, ALTHOUGH THEY BOTH SHARE THE SAME JOB CLASSIFICATION. CONTROLLERS ARE ASSIGNED TO AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL CENTERS AND TOWERS WHERE THEY USE RADAR AND/OR VISUAL OBSERVATION TO MONITOR, INSTRUCT, SEPARATE, AND CONTROL AIR TRAFFIC ON TAKE-OFF, IN-FLIGHT, WHILE WAITING TO LAND, AND IN LANDING. THE TIMELINESS AND ACCURACY OF CONTROLLERS' DECISIONS ARE CRITICAL AND PILOTS ARE GENERALLY REQUIRED BY REGULATION TO COMPLY WITH THEIR INSTRUCTIONS.

IN CONTRAST, FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SPECIALISTS ARE LOCATED IN FLIGHT SERVICE STATIONS. THEIR WORK IS PRIMARILY ADVISORY AND ADMINISTRATIVE IN NATURE, AND THEY HAVE NO AUTHORITY TO CONTROL AIR TRAFFIC OR TO REQUIRE PILOTS TO FOLLOW THEIR ADVICE. THEIR DUTIES INCLUDE MAKING WEATHER OBSERVATIONS, COLLECTING WEATHER REPORTS FROM OTHER SOURCES, GIVING PILOTS PREFLIGHT WEATHER BRIEFINGS, AND ACCEPTING FLIGHT PLANS FROM PILOTS AND TRANSMITTING THEM BY TELETYPE TO CENTERS AND TERMINALS.

THE EXTENSION OF BENEFITS TO FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SPECIALISTS WAS EXTENSIVELY EXPLORED BY FAA IN 1972 AND 1975; THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON POST OFFICE AND CIVIL SERVICE IN 1972; OUR OFFICE IN 1975; AND THIS COMMITTEE'S SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMPENSATION AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS IN 1975 AND 1978. IN EACH OF THESE DELIBERATIONS IT WAS RECOGNIZED THAT THE WORK OF THE SPECIALIST WAS SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT FROM, AND LESS RESPONSIBLE AND STRESSFUL THAN, THAT OF CONTROLLERS. THERE ALSO ARE DIFFERENCES IN GRADE STRUCTURE AND PHYSICAL

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS. FURTHER EVIDENCE IS THE FACT THAT BEFORE PUBLIC LAW 92-297 WAS ENACTED, FORMER CONTROLLERS WHO HAD BEEN MEDICALLY DISQUALIFIED WERE TRANSFERRED TO FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SPECIALIST POSITIONS. FORMER CONTROLLERS, NOW FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SPECIALISTS, TOLD US THAT THE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SPECIALISTS WERE OF A LESSER MAGNITUDE, SIGNIFICANCE, OR IMPORTANCE THAN THOSE OF CONTROLLERS AND THAT SPECIALISTS DID NOT EXPERIENCE THE SAME STRESSES AND STRAINS AS CONTROLLERS. WE PRESUME THAT THESE FINDINGS WOULD ALSO APPLY TO ANY SPECIALISTS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE.

THE EXTENSION OF PUBLIC LAW 92-297 BENEFITS TO FLIGHT SERVICE STATION SPECIALISTS WOULD UNNECESSARILY INCREASE TRAINING AND RETIREMENT COSTS AND GIVE RISE TO DEMANDS FOR SIMILAR TREATMENT FROM EMPLOYEES WHO DO NOT HAVE THESE SPECIAL BENEFITS.

WE HAVE NOT FULLY EXPLORED THE COMPARATIVE DUTIES OF CIVILIAN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND FAA. WE DID NOTE THAT THEY ARE IN THE SAME JOB CLASSIFICATION SERIES AND, ACCORDING TO DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS, THEIR DUTIES ARE SIMILAR. THUS, PLACING BOTH GROUPS ON AN EQUAL FOOTING WOULD SEEM TO BE APPROPRIATE.

FINALLY, H.R. 3503 AS WELL AS H.R. 3479 WOULD LIMIT PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND CAREER PROGRAM TO EMPLOYEES NOT OTHERWISE ELIGIBLE FOR RETIREMENT. SUCH A LIMITATION SHOULD HELP OVERCOME ONE PROBLEM DISCLOSED BY OUR REVIEW, THAT IS, CONTROLLER PREFERENCES FOR OTHER FEDERAL BENEFITS.

MADAM CHAIRWOMAN, THIS CONCLUDES MY STATEMENT. WE WILL BE GLAD TO RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.