

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 24, 2018

Daniel K. Elwell
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

We write today with concerns about the length of time in which the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) moved to enact the airworthiness directive for certain CFM56-7B turbofan engines, Docket No. FAA-2017-0313.

It is hard to imagine a more important duty at the FAA than ensuring passenger safety during airlift, and with that, the importance of ensuring plane engines do not fail before, or in the duration, of a flight. We would expect the FAA to move as quickly as possible on airworthiness directives that ensure plane engines are safe, and have an assessed lifespan for those engines. Following the tragedy with Southwest Airlines Flight 1380, we believe Congressional oversight over FAA actions is extremely important, and thus we seek answers to the following questions:

1. While we understand there is no set timeline duration for rulemaking processes, why did the FAA take almost two years to move on an airworthiness directive to ensure CFM56-7B engines were safe to fly?
2. The FAA has the ability to directly issue a final rule or airworthiness directive without a public comment period in cases where safety concerns warrant immediate action. Did the FAA believe Docket No. FAA-2017-0313 warranted expedited action? If not, why?
3. Please provide a definition under which the FAA decides a rulemaking or airworthiness directives warrants immediate action.
4. What can the FAA do to ensure that this type of delay doesn't happen on future airworthiness directives on important safety issues?
5. How does FAA evaluate industry requests for delayed airworthiness directives against the need for immediate safety improvements? Please provide a list of comments, and groups, requesting a delay on this rulemaking.
6. Can you submit a list of other airworthiness directives that are currently under consideration at the FAA?

We fear that the FAA moved too slowly to ensure CFM56-7B engines had the appropriate federal oversight while they were in use. We would expect your agency to correct this procedural delay, and ensure that other airworthiness directives are acted upon in a timely manner. The FAA has the responsibility to appropriately regulate all passenger airlines and ensure the flying public that any airplane engine in use is ready to get them to their destination safely.

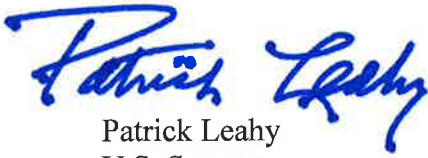
Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Tom Udall
U.S. Senator



Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator



Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator