

SHEILA JACKSON LEE  
18TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

WASHINGTON OFFICE:  
2160 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
(202) 225-3816

DISTRICT OFFICE:  
1919 SMITH STREET, SUITE 1180  
THE GEORGE "MICKEY" LELAND FEDERAL BUILDING  
HOUSTON, TX 77002  
(713) 655-0050

ACRES HOME OFFICE:  
6719 WEST MONTGOMERY, SUITE 204  
HOUSTON, TX 77019  
(713) 691-4882

HEIGHTS OFFICE:  
420 WEST 19TH STREET  
HOUSTON, TX 77008  
(713) 861-4070

FIFTH WARD OFFICE:  
3300 LYONS AVENUE, SUITE 301  
HOUSTON, TX 77020

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

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**CONGRESSWOMAN SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

**STATEMENT**

**IN SUPPORT OF AMENDMENT #48**

**TO H.R. 658**

**“FAA REAUTHORIZATION AND REFORM  
ACT OF 2011.”**



**MARCH 30, 2011**

**I want to thank Chairman Drier and the Members of the House Rules Committee for this opportunity to explain my amendment, to H.R. 658, “FAA Reauthorization and Reform Act.” I have offered amendment (#48), which will establish a mandate that at all times at the top twenty international and domestic United States airports, there shall be no fewer than three air traffic controllers on duty during period of airfield operations.**

**We have all heard much about the air traffic controller who fell asleep on the job last week, forcing two airliners carrying more than 150 passengers and crew to land without the proper assistance from ground support. It is a blessing that**

**the pilots had the wherewithal to handle the situation safely, securely, and without incident.**

**The fact that an air traffic controller, who holds so much responsibility in his hands, could fall asleep on the job is shocking in itself. What is more shocking, is that this is not the first incident at National Airport, where a traffic control tower was left unmanned for an extended period of time. About one-year ago, another traffic controller locked themselves out of the tower. These incidents may be uncommon, but they are sufficient enough to highlight a gap in our system.**

**This amendment creates a mandate, that at all times there must be a minimum of three air traffic controllers in the tower during hours of airfield operation. I commend Secretary LaHood for ordering a second air traffic controller to be on duty**

**overnight at National Airport. However, the Secretary's action simply evidences that there is no current mandate for multiple air traffic controllers. According to the National Air Traffic Controllers Association, most airports operate 24 hours a day with two controllers in the tower for the midnight-to-6 AM shift. The operative word is "most", we must act to create a uniform nationwide standard, verifiable and enforceable by the FAA.**

**My amendment rectifies this problem, by creating such a mandate, not only at National Airport, but at the top twenty international and domestic airports in the nation. This is a common-sense issue, and we need not bog ourselves down with concerns about the added costs of increased staffing in traffic control towers. Our system is clearly not impervious to the effects of human error,**

**and all it takes is one accident for us to regret not acting on this amendment.**

**Mr. Chairman, my amendment is essential to counter carelessness and gaps in the FAA's air traffic control policies. For these reasons, I urge the Committee to make amendment #48 in order. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**

**AMENDMENT TO THE RULES COMMITTEE PRINT  
OF H.R. 658  
OFFERED BY MS. JACKSON LEE OF TEXAS**

Page 138, after line 9, insert the following (and conform the table of contents accordingly):

1 **SEC. 318. MINIMUM STAFFING OF AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL-**  
2 **TERS.**

3 (a) **IN GENERAL.**—The Secretary of Transportation  
4 shall take such actions as may be necessary to ensure that,  
5 at a covered airport, not fewer than 3 air traffic control-  
6 lers are on duty at all times during periods of airfield oper-  
7 ations.

8 (b) **COVERED AIRPORT.**—In this section, the term  
9 “covered airport” means the 20 largest airports in the  
10 United States, in terms of annual passenger enplanements  
11 for the most recent calendar year for which data are avail-  
12 able.

