

United States Senate

November 20, 2024

Timothy L. Arel
Chief Operating Officer
Air Traffic Organization
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

David Ritchey
Director of Aviation
Serco North America
12930 Worldgate Drive
Suite 600
Herndon, VA 20170

Dear Mr. Arel and Mr. Ritchey:

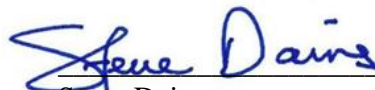
I write today regarding my serious concerns with the persistent and harmful shortage of air traffic controllers (ATC) at Bozeman Yellowstone International Airport (BZN), Glacier Park International Airport (GPI), and Missoula Montana Airport (MSO). Failure to provide sufficient staffing levels to rectify this situation in a timely manner will negatively impact Montana's economy, significantly delay air traffic, and jeopardize the safety of the flying public.

As you know, BZN, GPI, and MSO all participate in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Contract Tower Program. Under this program, ATC towers at these airports are staffed by employees of private companies rather than by FAA employees. Serco is contracted to operate many of these towers, including the three in Montana. Unfortunately, Montana's contract towers have been plagued with insufficient staffing levels for the past several months. Now, conditions have deteriorated to the point where some towers are open and operating less than half of the time they should be per day.

With BZN, GPI, and MSO being among the busiest airports in Montana and worsening weather conditions approaching, the current situation is wholly untenable. I urge Serco to deploy temporary duty controllers to Montana's contract towers and work to bring these towers to full staff as quickly as possible. I also encourage the FAA to work with BZN, GPI, and MSO to transition these airports from contract towers to federal towers operated by the FAA.

Having no tower control during arrivals or departures during a Montana winter is both dangerous and unacceptable. It is incumbent upon both of your organizations to ensure the safety of the flying public. To that end, I expect Serco to meet its contractual obligations and the FAA to hold Serco to account when they fail to do so. It is past time for the ATC towers at BZN, GPI, and MSO to be staffed appropriately and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Steve Daines
United States Senator