

## [Cantwell Urges FAA to Keep Air Traffic Control Towers Open](#)

### Local News

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WASHINGTON, D.C. &ndash; In a new [letter](#), U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and a bipartisan group of six other Senate and House aviation leaders urged the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to prevent the closure of 149 air traffic control towers across the country. The 149 contract towers &ndash; which are operated by contractors for the FAA &ndash; are scheduled to close on June 15. Five contract towers in Washington state would be among the contract towers closed under the current plan: Renton Municipal Airport, Tacoma Narrows Airport, Yakima Air Terminal/McAllister Field, Felts Field in Spokane, and Olympia Regional Airport. View the full list [here](#). The [letter](#) sent Thursday to U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood and FAA Administrator Michael Huerta was led by Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation Chairman John D. Rockefeller IV (D-WV) and Ranking Member John Thune (R-SD). The letter was also signed by Cantwell and Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R-NH), the Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Aviation Operations, Safety and Security. It was also signed by House commerce and aviation leaders: Representatives Bill Shuster (R-PA), Nick Rahall (D-WV) and Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ).

**&ldquo;We are profoundly disappointed with the decision of the FAA to target 149 FAA contract control towers for closure on June 15,&rdquo;** the Senators and Representatives wrote. **&ldquo;We ask that you identify lower priority spending elsewhere in the FAA&rsquo;s budget for reduction.&rdquo;**The FAA had initially planned to begin the closure of the contract towers on April 7, but on April 5 the FAA announced the closures would be delayed until June 15. Cantwell had raised concerns with Huerta about the impact of the potential closures in Washington state and around the country. **&ldquo;The decision to shutter contract towers on such a wide-scale basis is unprecedented,&rdquo;** the letter continued. **&ldquo;It is deeply troubling that the agency seems intent on proceeding with the closure of key air traffic control assets absent adequate safety and study. We recognize that the FAA faces difficult choices, but in this instance we remain opposed to the FAA&rsquo;s actions and will continue to urge action to keep contract towers open and operational.&rdquo;**A Commerce Committee [hearing](#) on aviation safety has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, at 2:30 p.m. FAA Administrator Huerta is scheduled to testify. The hearing will examine the consequences of sequestration on the FAA and the agency&rsquo;s efforts to implement safety provisions in recent FAA reauthorizations.