

HOUSE APPROVES FOUR-YEAR NTSB REAUTHORIZATION ACT

October 8, 2010

What's At Issue

On September 29, 2010, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 4714, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Reauthorization Act of 2010 to reauthorize the agency through fiscal year (FY) 2014.

Why It's Important

H.R. 4714 provides the NTSB with additional resources to accomplish its goals of determining the probable cause of transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety.

The bill has been submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation for further review. It is unclear if the bill will be completed by the Senate before the end of the year.

Major Provisions

The bill authorizes increased funding over the next four years along and contains a few provisions intended to aid the NTSB with its mission.

➤ **Authorization**

- Increased funding levels are provided to add 66 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, increasing the NTSB's current staffing to over 477 FTEs. This, according to the NTSB, is their optimal level of staffing, permitting the agency to take on more investigations and provide more theory and techniques to advance safety recommendations.
- \$107.6 million is provided for FY 2011.
- \$115.3 million is provided for FY 2012.
- \$122.2 million is provided for FY 2013.
- \$124.2 million is provided for FY 2014.

➤ **Public Hearings**

- The NTSB must develop a list of criteria to determine whether to hold a public hearing in an investigation. Consideration must be given to specific factors, such as significant loss of life, property damage, a national transportation safety issue, and whether a public hearing would be useful in gathering additional information.
- The NTSB must also report annually to Congress why it did not conduct a public hearing for certain accidents.

➤ **Study of the Party System**

- The Government Accountability Office is tasked with studying the NTSB's party system for investigations.

OVER...

(Major Provisions Continued)

- The report must evaluate the appropriateness of expanding the system to include on-going representatives who can provide specific expertise, whether the system provides unfair advantages to certain party members or creates a bias favoring those members and whether eliminating the party process would compromise investigations.
- **Investigation Authority**
 - Clarifies that the NTSB is not required to determine a single cause or probable cause of a transportation accident, but may determine that there was more than one probable cause.
 - Provides the NTSB the authority to issue subpoenas to those who may have evidence relevant to the investigation. Subpoenas may be issued in all investigations, whether they meet the requirements of public hearings or not to allow for broader research and a more thorough investigation.
 - With assistance from the U.S. Department of State, the NTSB is permitted to conduct transportation-related investigations involving Americans overseas.
 - The NTSB is required to enter into agreements with the Department of Transportation modal agencies, including the Federal Aviation Administration, detailing the conditions under which the NTSB will conduct incident investigations and the roles for the NTSB and agency staff in those investigations.
- **Inspection, Testing, Preserving and Moving Aircraft and Parts**
 - Provides for the inspection and testing for any civil aircraft, aircraft engine, propeller, appliance, or property on an aircraft involved in an accident in air commerce.
 - Allows the NTSB to obtain any recording devices pertinent to an accident.

NATA Position

The increased funding provided in the legislation allows the NTSB to continue its mission.

Status

H.R. 4714 was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on September 29, 2010. It was forwarded to the Senate for possible consideration and action before the Congress adjourns at the end of the year.

[Click here to review H.R. 4714.](#)

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