



CITIZENS FOR  
RESPONSIBILITY &  
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

May 18, 2026

The Honorable Jerry Moran  
Chair, Subcommittee on Aviation, Space, and Innovation  
Dirksen Senate Office Building 521  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Tammy Duckworth  
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Aviation, Space, and Innovation  
Hart Senate Office Building 524  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Moran and Ranking Member Duckworth:

On behalf of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting accountable government, we strongly urge you to exercise your constitutional oversight authority related to Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Bryan Bedford's conflicts of interest, hold him accountable for apparent violations of his ethics agreement and ensure that he abides by ethics rules that prevent financial benefits from driving agency decisions that affect airline passenger safety. The Subcommittee on Aviation, Space, and Innovation's ("the Subcommittee") May 19 hearing, "Preventing Future Collisions: Evaluation of FAA Safety Measures from the DCA Crash," presents a critical opportunity to address the administrator's apparent ethical lapses and whether concerns arising from his actions related to his ethics agreement commitments could become a safety issue for American airline passengers. It is our strong belief that Administrator Bedford's conflicts could potentially undermine airline safety and that Congress must exercise its constitutional oversight responsibilities to ensure that Administrator Bedford puts the safety of American air travelers before his own financial interests and the priorities of his former employer.

Following his nomination and prior to his Senate confirmation, Mr. Bedford submitted a financial disclosure report and signed an ethics agreement pursuant to the financial disclosure requirements of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978.<sup>1</sup> That ethics agreement, submitted as part of his confirmation process, is intended to provide assurances to senators and effectively serves as the nominee's promise to take certain actions to comply

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<sup>1</sup> See 5 U.S.C. § 13111.

with the law as a condition of a senator's vote to confirm, providing assurance that any conflicts revealed by the financial disclosure report will be resolved in a prescribed timeframe and in accordance with the law. Mr. Bedford's financial disclosure report reflected that at the time of his nomination he held the position of president, CEO and member of the board of directors for Republic Airways Holdings, Inc., a regional airline headquartered in Indiana, as well as president and CEO of twelve "wholly-owned subsidiaries" of the company through the time of his confirmation.<sup>2</sup> According to its website, Republic Airways "operates flights on behalf of American Airlines (as American Eagle), Delta Airlines (as Delta Connection) and United Airlines (as United Express)."<sup>3</sup>

Prior to his confirmation, Mr. Bedford committed in his ethics agreement to divesting his financial interests—including resigning all positions and divesting stocks and equity interests—in Republic Airways, where he worked for over two decades, within 90 days of confirmation.<sup>4</sup> In his ethics agreement, Mr. Bedford also acknowledged that he received what ethics rules consider "an extraordinary payment"<sup>5</sup> based on his departure from the company for a future government role.<sup>6</sup>

Compliance with these commitments is not voluntary; they are the law. Moreover, compliance would have signaled Administrator Bedford's commitment to adhere to the primary obligation of public servants: that public service is a public trust.<sup>7</sup> Honoring that duty by "respect[ing] and adher[ing] to the principles of ethical conduct" gives the American people "confidence in the integrity of the Federal Government."<sup>8</sup> But nearing one year after his confirmation, Administrator Bedford has not earned that confidence. Instead, it appears he has disregarded the ethics rules that he committed to follow when seeking a federal job to control and regulate the airline industry. To that end, roughly three months after his confirmation, when he was due to certify that he had reached full compliance with his ethics agreement, he informed the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) that he had "not yet divested my Republic Airways stock."<sup>9</sup> While he requested an extension from OGE to do so, the request was still pending at the time of his initial deadline and OGE eventually denied the request because "it did not meet the standard for granting an amendment" to the ethics

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<sup>2</sup> Bryan Bedford, *OGE Form 278e (Initial 2025), Part 1 - Filer's Positions Held Outside United States Government*, Federal Aviation Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation (Apr. 28, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/yw3pdzhd>.

<sup>3</sup> Customer Service Plan, Republic Airways, <https://rjet.com/passengers/customer-service-plan/> (last visited May 12, 2026).

<sup>4</sup> Bryan Bedford, *Letter regarding Ethics Agreement to Judith S. Kaleta, Deputy General Counsel and Designated Agency Ethics Official* (June 4, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/bd288rbn>.

<sup>5</sup> Extraordinary payments include cash or investment interests paid by a former employer to an individual entering federal service that is valued at more than \$10,000, not part of an established compensation or benefits program, and is paid after the former employer knew that the official was being considered for or accepted a government position. 5 C.F.R. § 2635.503(b)(1).

<sup>6</sup> Bedford, *supra* n.4.

<sup>7</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.101(a).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Bryan Bedford, *Ethics Agreement Compliance Certification* (Oct. 7, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/4cnsf2ux>.

agreement.<sup>10</sup> OGE also contacted the Senate Committee for Commerce, Science and Transportation in December 2025 to inform it that, to OGE's knowledge, Administrator Bedford had still not complied with his commitment to divest the Republic assets that were identified as posing a conflict.<sup>11</sup> In February 2026, Administrator Bedford filed a financial disclosure report showing that his "private company stock in Republic Airways, Inc. was exchanged for publicly traded shares of Republic Airways stock" and he subsequently sold the shares, finally following through with the full divestiture as he had promised after his nomination last June 2025.<sup>12</sup>

According to the transaction report that detailed his divestiture, the total value of the sales could have exceeded \$25 million.<sup>13</sup> His delay in following the law and divesting his stock and equity interests seemingly permitted him a significant financial windfall. Moreover, it raises questions about his trustworthiness in following other ethical commitments he made to this Committee, including whether he would abide by ethics rules in agency regulatory matters that could financially benefit his former company.

Administrator Bedford's failure to divest the stock in a timely manner has proved to be a critical ethical failure that undermines the public trust in his leadership. Republic Airways issued a press release on November 25, 2025 announcing that it had successfully merged with Mesa Air Group, Inc. According to Republic Airways, "[t]he transaction was announced on April 7, 2025 and approved by Mesa stockholders on November 17, 2025" and as a result, "Republic stockholders now own approximately 88% of the combined company's common stock."<sup>14</sup> The merger resulted in Republic Airways becoming a publicly traded company<sup>15</sup> and experiencing "revenue growth of 20.6%" in the fourth quarter of 2025.<sup>16</sup>

Executive branch standards of conduct prohibit officials from taking any action at the agency that would have a financial effect on their former employers for one year following their appointment.<sup>17</sup> The rules also similarly prohibit officials who received "extraordinary payments" from their former employer prior to taking a government job from working on matters involving that employer for two years.<sup>18</sup> Finally, those rules bar officials from participating in agency actions at any time that would create an appearance of impropriety, leading a reasonable person to question their impartiality,<sup>19</sup> and also prohibit officials from

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<sup>10</sup> Letter from Office of Government Ethics to Ted Cruz, Chair, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation (Dec. 8, 2025), <https://www.commerce.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/media/doc/REDACTED%20Dec.%208%20OGE%20Letter.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> See Bryan Bedford, *OGE Form 278-T, Federal Aviation Administration*, U.S. Department of Transportation (Feb. 27, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/5ft9p2e3>.

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Press Release, *Republic Airways and Mesa Air Group Complete Merger*, Republic Airways (Nov. 25, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/3d4h6z5j>.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> Press Release, *Republic Airways Holdings, Inc. Announces Q4 and Full Year 2025 Financial Results*, Republic Airways (Mar. 4, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/3ektdj4n>.

<sup>17</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502.

<sup>18</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.503(a).

<sup>19</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502(a).

using their official authority from using their office for the private gain of any of their personal associates.<sup>20</sup>

Even after the mandatory recusals expire after Administrator Bedford's first two years at FAA, Administrator Bedford should still voluntarily recuse himself from participating in any matters that may result in agency actions that benefit his former employer because his participation could create an appearance of impropriety. During his confirmation process, Administrator Bedford gave conflicting or at best unclear answers about his intentions to recuse for the duration of his five-year tenure from certain matters that would certainly affect Republic Airways, specifically if Republic Airway follows up on their request to the FAA that they be exempted from the agency's 1,500 hour rule, a request they previously sought in 2022 and were denied.<sup>21</sup>

That 1,500 hour rule requires anyone applying for an airline transport pilot certificate to have at least 1,500 hours of experience as a pilot.<sup>22</sup> Citing the 1,500 hour rule, the FAA's website currently heralds itself as maintaining "the world's strictest qualification for airline pilots" as part of its safety regime.<sup>23</sup> Congress adopted, on a bipartisan basis, the 1,500 hour rule in 2010 following the tragic February 2009 crash of Colgan Air Flight 3407 in Buffalo, New York that killed 50 passengers, pilots and crew members.<sup>24</sup> Congress saw the rule as "an important safety measure that was missing from previous federal aviation regulations" and "evidence of the justification for this important policy adjustment has proved undeniable. [...] [D]uring the years between the introduction of the new rule in 2010 and 2024, the related fatality rate dropped by 99.8 percent."<sup>25</sup> However, while Bedford was at the helm of Republic Airways, the company sought to reduce the total number of training hours by half to 750 hours,<sup>26</sup> claiming it would help them address a pilot shortage that had caused the airline to cut service and consequently lose revenue.<sup>27</sup>

Administrator Bedford's failure to clearly promise to recuse himself for the duration of his tenure raises questions about his commitment to ethics rules, particularly in light of his open disregard of timely divesting his financial interests. More dangerously, his lack of commitment opens the door to serious risk for airline passengers. Republic Airway's desire to be exempt from the 1,500 hour rule may permit it to cut costs, but those financial benefits will come at the expense of passenger safety. Congress must use Administrator Bedford's

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<sup>20</sup> 5 C.F.R. § 2635.702.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Plotch, *Senators Air Frustrations at FAA Nominee's Hearing*, Eno Center for Transportation (June 13, 2025), <https://tinyurl.com/3yhvvw5b>.

<sup>22</sup> 14 C.F.R. § 61.159.

<sup>23</sup> Federal Aviation Administration, *Safety: The People*, <https://www.faa.gov/safety/people> (last visited May 11, 2026).

<sup>24</sup> John Perkinson, *How the 1,500-Hour Rule Transformed Airline Safety*, ALPA (Feb. 2, 2026), <https://tinyurl.com/y7ar2mhs>; Press Release, *Senate Passes FAA Funding Extension with Safety Provisions*, S. Comm. on Com., Sci., & Transp. (July 30, 2010), <https://www.commerce.senate.gov/press/rep/release/senate-passes-faa-funding-extension-with-safety-provisions-2010-7/>.

<sup>25</sup> *See id.*

<sup>26</sup> Leslie Josephs, *FAA rejects proposal to halve flight-time requirement for pilots as shortage prompts route cuts*, CNBC (Sept. 19, 2022), <https://tinyurl.com/yvcchymf>.

<sup>27</sup> David Schaper, *1 airline made a bid to reduce flight hours required for new pilots. FAA rejects it*, NPR, (Sept. 27, 2022), <https://tinyurl.com/3kyv6txd>.

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appearance before this committee to evaluate his commitment to the safety of American air travelers and ensure that his apparent ethical lapses and lack of commitments do not harm their safety and security.

CREW greatly appreciates your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Donald K. Sherman  
President and Chief Executive Officer

Cc: The Honorable Ted Cruz, Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation

The Honorable Sam Graves, Chair  
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Mr. Eric Ueland  
Acting Director, U.S. Office of Government Ethics

Mr. Mitch Behm  
Acting Inspector General, Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General