

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 21, 2019

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller Dodaro:

We write to urge you to consider the impact of past changes to the Essential Air Service (EAS) program on the Crater Lake-Klamath Regional Airport as part of your report on reforms to the EAS program.

The Crater Lake-Klamath Regional Airport is a critical transportation link for the region, but has faced challenges finding carriers willing to serve a smaller market. Regular air service allows remote communities to increase economic opportunity and attract visitors and new businesses. In the case of Klamath Falls, the airport is a crucial asset to the local economy in Klamath Falls, as well as the Air National Guard operating out of Kingsley Field.

Across rural Oregon and America, there is high demand from local businesses for commercial air service to provide a necessary link to the nation's economy, and to increase the community's economy by adding jobs and bringing in visitors. Some rural airports, like the Crater Lake-Klamath Regional Airport in Klamath Falls, meet many of the criteria for the EAS program, but are denied eligibility because they were not receiving subsidies in 2011.

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (PL 115-254) requires the Comptroller General of the United States to conduct a study on the impact of several changes to the EAS program since 2010. We urge you to consider the impact of Sec. 422 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (PL 112-95), which limits entry into the program to airports that were participating in the program between September 30, 2010 and September 30, 2011, on the EAS program. The Crater Lake-Klamath Regional Airport is not alone in being otherwise eligible for the program if it was not for this provision.

Congress established the EAS program to help small communities that were served by certificated air carriers prior to the Airline Deregulation Act continue to receive passenger service. On behalf of the small communities we represent, we would request that you review how recent legislative changes to the EAS program have affected airports like Crater Lake-Klamath Regional Airport.

Thank you for your attention to this issue, and we look forward to a swift response.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

Ron Wyden
United States Senator

Greg Walden
Member of Congress