

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 13, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

On January 29, 2025, 67 souls were lost in the midair collision between an American Airlines flight inbound to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA) and a U.S. Army helicopter. The survivors of the loved ones lost and our unanimous commitment is to prevent a tragedy like this from happening ever again. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB or Board) is vital to ensuring that outcome which is why we were alarmed by the abrupt firing of Alvin Brown who recently served as the Vice Chair of the Board. We urge you to reevaluate your Administration's actions related to Mr. Brown and reinstate his membership to the NTSB.<sup>1</sup>

The law directs the President to appoint, and the Senate to consent to, the five members of the Board, each serving a term of five years.<sup>2</sup> Congress designed the Board to represent a range of viewpoints by mandating that no more than three of the five members be of the same political party.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Congress removed the Board from the Department of Transportation and reestablished it as an independent establishment of the U.S. government to ensure the NTSB retains its independence and that NTSB staff are able to fulfill their mission of performing investigations into certain transportation accidents, including every civil aviation accident in the United States, by determining the probable cause of the accident and issuing safety recommendations.<sup>4</sup>

The NTSB provides support to the victims, survivors, and families following a transportation accident – including facilitating the recovery and identification of fatally injured passengers. The NTSB has earned the trust of the transportation industry and millions of Americans through many grueling investigations; because of the NTSB, improved transportation safety has come out of calamity and tragedy. Upwards of “82 percent of NTSB recommendations have led to the implementation of safety improvements deemed acceptable by the Board.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Homendy, J. (2025, March 26). *Testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies*. U.S. House of Representatives. <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP20/20250326/118045/HHRG-119-AP20-Wstate-HomendyJ-20250326.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> United States Code. (n.d.). 49 U.S.C. § 1111(b) – Appointment of Members.

<sup>3</sup> United States Code. (n.d.). 49 U.S.C. § 1111(b) – Appointment of Members.

<sup>4</sup> United States Code. (n.d.). 49 U.S.C. § 1111(a) – General organization.

<sup>5</sup> Congressional Research Service. (2016, September 6). *The Congressional Review Act (CRA): Frequently Asked Questions* (CRS Report No. R44587). <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44587>

On May 5, 2025, you fired the Vice Chair of the NTSB, Mr. Alvin Brown. Mr. Brown was appointed by President Biden and confirmed by the Senate in December 2024 to a term expiring on December 31, 2026. When you fired Mr. Brown, you failed to identify a potential replacement, creating a vacancy on the Board as it manages nearly 1,250 investigations in the United States, and supports close to 160 foreign investigations.<sup>6</sup> You provided no justification or explanation for Mr. Brown's abrupt removal even as the law requires that a Board member may only be removed for cause in the form of inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance of office.<sup>78</sup> When your Administration removed Mr. Brown from his position on the National Transportation Safety Board, you made it clear that it was for reasons unrelated to those enumerated in law and even thanked him for his service.<sup>9</sup> Had Congress intended NTSB members in good standing to be removable by the President at will, it would have written the law accordingly. Mr. Brown's removal is consistent with your Administration's dismissals of federal government leaders on the basis of bald partisanship and animus, however it is inconsistent with the law. The recklessness of vacating a leadership role on the NTSB in this critical moment in aviation safety runs counter to your obligations to the American people.

The traveling public relies on the NTSB to be a strong watchdog for transportation safety. Too many advances in aviation safety have come on the heels of a tragedy; but since 1967, the NTSB has worked to ensure the lessons learned are integrated into the aviation industry. Your recent actions indicate that your priorities for aviation safety are focused more on partisan politics rather than the safety of the millions of Americans who use our skies. We hope you will prove us wrong and ask that, in the absence of a showing that your actions to remove Mr. Brown complied with the law, you immediately reinstate Mr. Brown to the NTSB to complete his term of service as Vice Chair and to affirm your commitment to upholding the independence of the NTSB and allow the Board to perform their Congressionally-mandated duties to keep America's transportation systems safe.

Sincerely,

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<sup>6</sup> Homendy, J. (2025, March 26). *Testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies*. U.S. House of Representatives. <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AP/AP20/20250326/118045/HHRG-119-AP20-Wstate-HomendyJ-20250326.pdf>

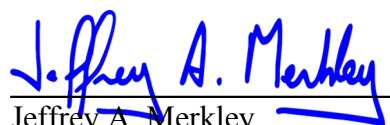
<sup>7</sup> United States Code. (n.d.). 49 U.S.C. § 1111(c) – *Terms of office and removal*.

<sup>8</sup> Golden, H. (2025, May 7). *Vice chair of the National Transportation Safety Board is unexpectedly removed from position*. Associated Press. <https://apnews.com/article/ntsb-vice-chair-removed-66319c7d69f248a9cbaf012845211922>

<sup>9</sup> Brown v. Trump, et. al., No 1:25-cv-01763, Complaint (D.D.C. June 4, 2025).



Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator