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HATCH STATEMENT AT MARKUP OF THE AIRPORT AND AIRWAY TRUST FUND REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2011

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee, delivered the following statement, as prepared for delivery, at a committee markup of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund Reauthorization Act of 2011:

Last week during our hearing on the Airport and Airway Trust Fund I said I was going to help you get FAA Reauthorization passed, and I'm glad, less than a week later, I have that opportunity.

As has already been repeatedly noted, this reauthorization has been a long time coming. Despite a package being reported more than three years ago from this Committee that had the input and approval of significant users of our airport and airway system, long-term reauthorization has languished beneath the neglect of 17 short-term extensions. Those 17 extensions have taken the place of a better allocation of the costs of sustaining the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. The absence of long-term reauthorization has made it more difficult for the stewards of our airports to budget resources for construction and maintenance. Even people interested in retro kitsch recoil at the thought of our antique air traffic control system. I'm sure anyone who has spent hours on the tarmac at Chicago O'Hare Airport because of a computer malfunction has thought profoundly about air traffic control modernization. The tax title we are looking at today will help promote the development and implementation of NextGen, the satellite based air traffic control system designed to take the place of the radar-based system we currently depend on.

Today we are putting this Committee behind a long-term reauthorization of the Airport and Airway Trust Fund. By promoting a better allocation of the burdens of funding our airport and airway system and fostering stability of the recourses needed to maintain and improve that system, we are promoting the development of our economy, and nurturing the freedom that comes with the ability to travel unimpeded.

In addition to reporting the tax title of a FAA reauthorization bill, this meeting serves another purpose, which is to assert the authority and integrity of the Finance Committee. Committee Members and their staffs might be unfamiliar with the procedure of a committee markup, and that is understandable because markup of tax legislation has not happened for

quite a while. The last time the Finance Committee marked up substantive tax legislation was in September and October of 2009, and that was the health bill.

Last year was a monster year for tax policy. The bipartisan tax relief of 2001 and 2003 was set to expire, along with several expiring tax provisions commonly referred to as tax extenders. On top of that, under current law the estate tax was set to snap back to its 2001 status, and in the process slash small businesses and family farms with crippling rates. All of these issues were dealt with on a short term basis, but a Finance Committee markup was not a part of that process.

I suppose the best way to sum up my comments is to advise Committee Members and their staffs to carefully observe the procedure of this markup, because my plan is for all of us to be doing this anytime a revenue bill, or any bill that falls within this great Committee's jurisdiction, is scheduled to be debated on the Senate floor.

Last week our eminent Chairman noted the lengths of time it has taken both of us to ascend to our respective positions of Ranking Member and Chairman of this Committee. The massive scope of this Committee's jurisdiction makes it imperative that those who guide this Committee have wisdom attained by years of experience and hard work. Given the long hours put in to gain the experience we have, we are obligated to direct that experience to the betterment of our nation. That will not happen if we abandon the Finance Committee's jurisdiction, and I will not let that happen. Now that we have been blessed to become Members of the Finance Committee, it is necessary for every single one of us, on both sides, to leverage our experience, along with the authority of the Finance Committee, to move this country forward.

That is what we are doing now, by considering the legislation before us. I'm grateful to our Chairman for scheduling this markup, and thank all of you for your commitment to making this Committee work.

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