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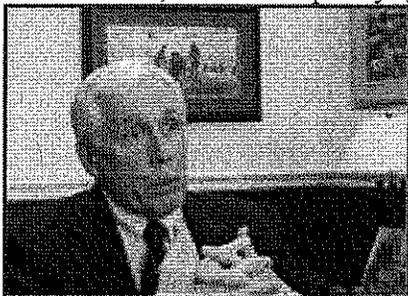
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Wolf Dresses Down Recalcitrant Airports Board

December 2, 2011 9:42 pm By: [Fairfax News](#)



Rep. Frank Wolf

The Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA) board is getting a lesson in governance from Rep. Frank Wolf (R-Va.).

Perturbed by the unelected board's practice of letting members continue to serve after their terms had expired, Wolf pushed through legislation last month that prohibits the practice. The measure also increases the size of the board from 13 to 17. Virginia got two new appointments while Maryland and the District of Columbia each got one additional board member.

Amazingly, the board's chairman, Charles Snelling, is resisting the changes and informed Wolf in a letter that the board has hired outside counsel, which advised the board that it was not necessarily bound by all of the law's provisions until Virginia, Maryland and D.C. change their laws to match the new federal measure. Wolf wrote back to Snelling, basically advising him to get on board.

"Contrary to what your board believes, the intent of Congress could not be more clear," Wolf said. "The changes to the MWAA board are included in both the bill and the accompanying [House-Senate] conference report. There was no need for MWAA to go to the expense of hiring outside counsel, which essentially provided the board with an advocacy piece."

"You should know," Wolf continued, "That I am going to ask the U.S. Department of Transportation's Inspector General, who is presently auditing MWAA's operations, to find out which member of the board requested hiring outside counsel and how much it cost."

Terms have ended

Wolf further advised Snelling that there is no question Presidentially-appointed board members are no longer authorized to serve past the end of their term. Any such authority ended on Nov. 18, when President Obama signed the legislation the board is disputing.

“Consequently, federally appointed members whose terms have expired are no longer members of the board,” Wolf wrote. “These former members should not travel to board meetings at MWAAs expense, be allowed to take part in any board deliberations or cast any votes.”

“Fighting these straightforward and bipartisan changes to the board not only adds to MWAAs expenses, but continues what a recent *Washington Post* editorial said is ‘a virtuoso display of tone-deaf politics, at least partly as a result of the lack of accountability by the unelected, 13-member board.’”

Besides operating Dulles and National Airports, MWAAs is building the \$6 billion Metro Silver Line to Dulles.

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