

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Federal Overregulation
Helps Ruin Airlines**

Your Jan. 18 editorial "Flying Blind" only skimmed the surface when it comes to the ways in which government meddling has created instability in commercial aviation. Taxpayers and consumers have for too long been burdened with the costs of federal overregulation at all levels.

For example: In the face of an \$8.2 billion budget shortfall for the nation's federally managed air traffic control system, now is the time for the U.S. to join the 38 nations that have commercialized their operations. A 2005 Government Accountability Office report that studied commercialization efforts overseas concluded that these services have improved efficiency without compromising safety.

Federal legislation that restricts the combined foreign ownership of any U.S. airline to 25% or less hinders investment in U.S. aviation as well as the influx of innovative ideas and services from other nations. It has also proven to be a major stumbling block in ongoing discussions over an "Open Skies" agreement with the European Union.

Lastly, the so-called "Wright Amendment," which limits flights in and out of Love Field near Dallas, is one of the primary reasons residents of north Texas pay a significantly higher average business fare. The Wright Amendment was recently expanded to include Missouri, but this absurd and anticompetitive law is emblematic of the myriad issues President Bush and Congress need to tackle if the airline industry can ever expect to take wing.

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