

New FAA head among appointments approved by Senate

Ros Krasny, Reuters

(Reuters) - The Senate late on Tuesday approved a number of key White House nominations to regulatory agencies, including the top job at Federal Aviation Administration that had been vacant for over a year.

Michael Huerta was confirmed as FAA administrator for a five-year term after acting in that role since December 2011, when his predecessor resigned after being arrested and charged with drunk driving.

Also confirmed were Joshua Wright to a seven-year term at the Federal Trade [Commission](#) [1] and Mignon Clyburn to a second term as commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission.

The approvals had been expected, although Wright, a law professor at George Mason University, had an acrimonious confirmation hearing in early December in the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

The committee did not vote on Wright's nomination but instead sent it, along with Clyburn's, directly to the Senate, which on Tuesday voted on a flurry of pending presidential nominations.

Wright, a Republican, has served as director of research at the International Center for Law and Economics, which has received funding from Google, the internet search giant that is the subject of a long-running FTC antitrust case.

In academic papers, Wright has questioned the merits of bringing the case against Google. In his confirmation hearing he pledged to recuse himself from any Google case for two years, should he be confirmed.

He will join the commission for a seven-year term.

Clyburn, a Democrat and the daughter of South Carolina Representative Jim Clyburn, joined the FCC, which regulates telecommunications, in 2009 for a partial term.

Her new appointment will run for five years, retroactive to July 1, 2012.

In a statement, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski said Clyburn "has been a strong advocate in seeking to extend the benefits of broadband to all Americans."

Huerta had been deputy administrator of the FAA since 2010 and acting administrator, overseeing a budget of about \$16 billion and over 47,000 employees,

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Randy Babbitt, the former FAA head, was arrested several miles from his home in Virginia, and charged with drunk driving on December 4, 2011. He resigned from the agency days later. The charge was later dismissed.

Huerta's appointment was hailed by industry groups, including airline operators, manufacturers, and pilots.

"Michael Huerta's proven leadership and clear grasp of the imperatives of NextGen make him the right choice to continue leading the FAA," Nicholas Calio, president of Airlines for America (A4A), said in a statement.

NextGen is the term used for the ongoing transformation of the U.S. National Airspace System, in which ground-based air traffic control will shift to a satellite-based system of traffic management.

Huerta has overseen that multi-billion-dollar effort, which is designed to allow more aircraft to fly closer together, reduce flight delays and lower fuel consumption.

(Reporting By Ros Krasny; Editing by Nick Zieminski)

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