

Dear General Aviation Caucus Member:

We are writing to request your support in signing a Dear Colleague letter authored by Representative Sam Graves (R-MO) regarding the *USA Today* article published on September 17, 2009, titled "Feds Keep Little Used Airports in Business." The article contains many misleading assertions and does not present an accurate picture of our nation's public-use airports, the importance of our national aviation system and federal investments in that system through the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP).

As you may know, the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides funding for the planning and development of public-use airports listed in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems (NPIAS). Airports eligible for AIP funding must be included in the NPIAS which is determined by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The NPIAS sets a number of important national guidelines for AIP eligibility, including the need for airports of all sizes to provide for national defense, emergency preparedness and response, medical emergencies, commerce and postal service.

It is also important to note how AIP dollars are distributed to our nation's airports. In 2007, 65.8% of the total share of AIP funds was allocated to airports served by the airlines, while 24.9% of the funding went to other public-use airports.

In addition, the article dismisses the extraordinary value that America's public-use airports and helicopters provide to small communities across the nation. The general aviation industry contributes \$150 billion annually to the U.S. economy and accounts for 1.2 million jobs. General aviation aircraft fly 27 million flight hours each year with 67 percent of those flights being used for business purposes.

There have been numerous responses by the general aviation industry to the bogus claims published in the *USA Today* article, and the FAA has released the following statement:

"General aviation airports play a critical role in the National System of Airports in the United States and contribute significantly to the economy. This sector of aviation accounts for more than 90 percent of the roughly 240,000 civil aircraft registered in the United States. The general aviation airports included in the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems provide the closest source of air transportation for about 19 percent of the population and are particularly important to rural areas. In addition to their significant contribution to the U.S. economy, general aviation airports support critical life-saving medical services, access to remote communities, law enforcement, agriculture, mail, and financial transactions. The FAA continues to work with Congress to ensure a more strategic investment in general aviation airports."

We respectfully request that you support our national aviation system and community airports across the country by signing the attached Dear Colleague letter.

Sincerely,



James K. Coyne
President
National Air Transportation Association



Tom Poberezny
President
Experimental Aircraft Association



Ed Bolen
President and CEO
National Business Aviation Association



Matthew S. Zuccaro
President
Helicopter Association International



Craig Fuller
President
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association



Pete Bunce
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