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April 6, 2014

The Honorable James Fannin  
Chairman, Louisiana House Appropriations Committee  
320 6th Street  
Jonesboro, LA 71251

Dear Chairman Fannin:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), a not-for-profit membership organization, is the world's largest aviation organization, representing the general aviation interests of pilots and aircraft owners nationwide, including over 3,700 of our members in Louisiana. Since 1939, AOPA has been committed to ensuring the safety, future viability, and development of general aviation as an integral part of our national transportation system. I write, on behalf of all of our members in the state, to express our **strong opposition to House Bill 587 to repeal the annual appropriation for airports**, currently scheduled to be heard by your Appropriations Committee on tomorrow, April 7<sup>th</sup>.

Every year, the Legislature appropriates the annual estimated revenue derived from the state taxes on aviation fuel (jet A and avgas) to the Louisiana Aviation Trust Fund. The monies from the Aviation Trust Fund are then used by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) – Aviation Division for airport infrastructure improvement projects, attracting additional air service, conducting airport safety inspections, obstacle removal, economic impact studies and state aviation system plans, and engaging in aviation outreach and education among others. A little bit of it, approximately 4%, goes to funding their office as well.

The DOTD Aviation Section's function is to provide oversight, inspection, and support to the State's over 800 airports/heliports, including the seven commercial air carriers and public general aviation airports, to insure a safe, modern, and well managed system of airports. The Aviation Trust Fund, in addition to providing "state only" airport improvements grants, provides a 5-10% match to 95-90% Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grants.

HB 587 would not only repeal the annual state appropriation from aviation fuel for airports, but it could also eliminate the ability for airports to obtain federal funding from the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Airport Improvement Program (AIP). As mentioned above, the Aviation Trust Fund provides matching funds for AIP grants. In addition, FAA Docket No. FAA-2013-0988, Notice of Proposed Request on the Federal Register, proposes to amend existing FAA policy to clarify the agency's federal requirements for the use of proceeds from taxes on aviation fuel. Under Federal law, airport operators that have accepted Federal assistance can only use airport revenues for airport-related purposes. This applies to state and local government taxes on aviation fuel

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as well as to revenues received directly by the airport. The proposed notice includes the following message:

“An airport operator or state government submitting an application under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) must provide assurance that revenues from state and local government taxes on aviation fuel are used for certain aviation-related purposes. These purposes include airport capital and operating costs, and state aviation programs.”

While Louisiana currently meets that requirement, HB 587, if approved, would repeal it, foregoing millions of aviation generated federal dollars, which create significant economic impact, support good jobs for Louisiana residents, and maintain critical transportation infrastructure.

Louisiana’s airports generate over \$3.3 billion in annual economic activity and they are valuable community assets. Airports provide flights to patients in need of critical medical care and emergency relief when natural forces, such as hurricanes, destroy communities. Airports also used by local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and provide flight and maintenance training to build the next generation of pilots and mechanics. There is a saying that says “the airport runway is the most important main street in town” and it is because a mile of road will take you a mile, but a mile of runway will take you anywhere. This is especially true and important for businesses.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 301-695-2096 or [yasmina.platt@aopa.org](mailto:yasmina.platt@aopa.org) if you or your staff have questions or need assistance.

Very truly yours,



Yasmina Platt  
Central Southwest Regional Manager

CC: All members of the House Appropriations Committee  
CC: Representative Thomas Carmody, Sponsor of HB 587  
CC: Brad Brandt, Aviation Director, LA DOTD – Aviation Section