

An open letter to residents of Martin County



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

421 Aviation Way • Frederick, MD 21701-4798
Telephone (301) 695-2000 • FAX (301) 695-2375

Dear Martin County voter:

I am writing to you as the leader of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), representing more than 400,000 pilots/members nationwide, with over 30,000 living in Florida. These people, many of them your neighbors, use General Aviation (GA) for personal and business transportation. **GA aircraft also provide a wide range of vital services** like medevac, crop dusters, news and police helicopters. They utilize a network of 5,400 public use airports in this country, opposed to the less than 600 airports with commercial air carrier service. For more than half a century one of these airports, Witham Field, has been an important part of the Stuart community. In that time it has been a significant contributor to the area's economic strength and vitality.

In the upcoming election there are candidates painting a negative picture of Witham Field as a focal point for the election. Not surprisingly, a lot of mis-information about the airport and general aviation has been a part of their distorted message.

Witham Field generates **tens of millions of dollars in direct economic benefit** to this area. Yet general aviation airports like Witham Field do more than just support the local economy. As part of the *national air system*, each airport is vital link to the rest of the country. Think of it as an interstate in the air; then **imagine what I-95 would be like without any on or off ramps.**

Hurricane Charley clearly substantiated that GA airports are increasingly essential, especially in times of crisis. Polk County's Lakeland Linder Regional Airport – similar in size to Witham – is serving as the site of **major relief efforts by federal, state and county agencies.** Thanks to this GA airport, emergency teams are able to fly in with supplies for much-needed disaster recovery efforts. One day, Witham Field may be called upon to provide this service to you and your neighbors.

Witham Field boasts some of the country's most aggressive anti-noise policies. In fact, your community leaders have worked closely with the Federal Aviation Administration to identify and implement solutions for local noise issues through a process known as the Part 150 noise study. As a result, there is a curfew from 11 PM to 7 AM, among many other effective voluntary actions.

In my travels throughout this great country I see many communities that would do anything to develop an airport with all the assets your community and the federal government have invested in Witham Field. GA has been – and will continue to be – an indispensable partner to local communities like yours. When you go to the polls next week, be sure you **vote for the leaders that have your long-term interests in mind.**

Thank you,

Phil Boyer
President

Member of International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations

Since 1939, AOPA has been making flying safer and more accessible to the nation's General Aviation pilots. With more than 400,000 members, it's the world's largest aviation association.



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General Aviation – GA is everything that flies – except scheduled airlines and the military. To learn more about how GA helps your community, please visit our website:

GAServingAmerica.org

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Dear Martin County voter:

As this week's election approaches I am again writing to you as the leader of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, representing more than 400,000 of the nation's general aviation pilots, with over 30,000 residing in Florida.

There are many issues affecting this week's election and how you cast your ballot. But a local group of wealthy business people is trying to make Witham Field a focal point of the election. Not surprisingly, a lot of mis-information about the airport and general aviation (GA) has been part of their distorted message. **Before you vote it's important to have the facts about general aviation, Witham Field and why both are important to you.**

Witham Field contributes more than \$14 million per year to the local economy. This fact is from a study conducted by the State of Florida in 2000 and reflects the annual value of visiting pilots and airplanes. This figure does *not* include many other indirect sources of revenue.

Witham Field provides this area with access to the rest of the country. As airline service deteriorates, GA is becoming increasingly important to small communities. And never has this been more apparent than in the aftermath of Hurricane Charley. Polk County's Lakeland Linder Regional Airport – similar in size to Witham – is currently serving as the site of major relief efforts by federal, state and county agencies. Thanks to this GA airport, emergency teams are able to fly in with supplies for much-needed disaster recovery efforts. One day, Witham Field may be called upon to provide this service to you and your neighbors.

Witham Field helps maintain open spaces in your community. Groups that want to close an airport almost always have two goals: commercial development and personal profit. Thanks to Witham Field, Martin County residents will have a great expanse of green space to enjoy for the long term.

Witham Field has some of the country's most aggressive anti-noise policies. Your community leaders have worked closely with the Federal Aviation Administration to identify and implement solutions for local noise issues through a process known as the Part 150 noise study. For that they should be congratulated!

As you go to the polls this week you will choose your leaders based upon a variety of issues facing Martin County. The airport, however, isn't one of them. General Aviation has been and will continue to be an indispensable partner to local communities like Martin County.

Thank you,

Phil Boyer
President

Member of International Council of Aircraft Owner and Pilot Associations

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