

[Congressional Record: May 13, 2003 (Extensions)]

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[DOCID:cr13my03-40]

IN SUPPORT OF AOPA

HON. **GARY G. MILLER**

of california

in the house of representatives

Tuesday, May 13, 2003

Mr. **GARY G. MILLER** of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association's (AOPA) Airport Support Network to save general aviation public use airports in California and across the entire United States. AOPA is the world's largest civil aviation organization, representing over 395,000 members who own or fly general aviation aircraft--more than half of all pilots in the United States.

Public and privately owned general aviation airports across the nation have fallen victim to mounting pressures for closure and restrictions; California airports are no exception. These community airports play a critical role to provide general aviation access to the San Diego community and the entire national air transportation system.

AOPA has pioneered two critical programs that work to protect and preserve safe and secure access of general aviation pilots to the nation's airspace and airports--the Airport Support Network and the Airport Watch Program.

The AOPA Airport Support Network provides a vehicle for pilots to communicate with AOPA. The program establishes an early warning system to alert AOPA and local communities of any efforts that may threaten airport viability. AOPA's Airport Support Network uses pilots as the "eyes and ears" at every public use airport, to preserve general aviation airports and their role in the national air transportation system.

The Airport Support Network has been very successful in my home state of California. AOPA efforts have produced successful steps toward the preservation of two very important California general aviation airports--Oceanside Municipal and Montgomery Field. The Airport Support Network encourages communication and activity that most recently resulted in the city council of Oceanside supporting an airport master plan that will ensure continued operations at the airport. I am encouraged by these efforts and believe that the Airport Support Network will help ensure that our system of general aviation airports remains protected and viable.

Airport Watch Program, formed out of a partnership between AOPA and TSA, was created to keep these viable airports safe and secure. Pilots and members of the general aviation community are being instructed in what to look for in the manner of suspicious activity at their airports. Educational materials have disseminated throughout the aviation community. Pilots are instructed to either contact local authorities or report suspicious activity to a nationwide toll free hotline--1-866-GA-SECURE.

Airport Watch is a great example of AOPA's efforts to promote security while preserving the freedom of the skies.

Again, I want to commend the AOPA and the over 49,000 members residing in the great state of California. I strongly support keeping general aviation airports open and will continue work with them in their efforts towards this end.
