

AOPA Interviews the



George W. Bush

Republican candidate for president

What is your experience with general aviation? How have you personally used general aviation?

Long before I entered public office in Texas, I flew F-102 fighters in the Texas Air National Guard. When I campaigned for governor of Texas, I regularly used general aviation to fly across Texas. Later, as governor, I frequently used State Aircraft Pooling Board

planes to conduct official business throughout the state. I know many people depend on general aviation to carry out their day-to-day responsibilities, and general aviation operators play a vital role in our economy.

As an elected official, what is the most important action you have taken to support general aviation?

General aviation is a vital component of our nation's transportation system. Last year, I signed Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act, a four-year, \$59 billion bill to make improvements at commercial and general aviation airports and to upgrade our air traffic control capability.

Continued on page 80

Candidates on GA



John Kerry

Democratic candidate for president

What is your experience with general aviation? How have you personally used general aviation?

I have been a pilot for more than 30 years, so I am quite familiar with general aviation.

As an elected official, what is the most important action you have taken to support general aviation?

A couple of things come to mind. First, I supported the General Aviation Revitalization Act in 1994, which is credited with getting the industry out of its economic slump and on the road to record growth. I also wrote a small business relief bill after September 11, 2001, which passed the Senate and would have made low-interest government loans available for an array of affected businesses, including general aviation businesses.

Continued on page 81



Bush from page 78

Airports are essential in accessing the national air transportation system, but are often faced with the threat of closure or limits on access. Do you support general aviation airports as part of the national airport system?

General aviation is an important part of our economy, and continued investment in civilian airports is central to our economic growth. My 2005 budget includes \$3.5 billion in federal funding for the Airport Improvement Program (AIP), which provides grants for airports to work on projects related to enhancing airport safety, capacity, security, and environmental concerns. And the FAA operates a shared system of air traffic control and navigation to keep civil, commercial, and military aircraft safe in the skies.

Post 9/11, some have singled out general aviation, in comparison to other transportation modes, as a security concern. How do you view general aviation security?

The terrorist attacks of September 11 served as a wakeup call for America. We have introduced new security efforts to keep our homeland and modes of transportation safe for our citizens and safe from future attacks. The federal government has taken steps to secure both commercial and general aviation. We have asked the Aviation Security Advisory Committee (ASAC) to establish a working group made up of industry stakeholders to develop guidelines for security enhancements at the nation's privately and publicly owned and operated general aviation facilities. This listing of recommended guidelines or

“best practices” is designed to establish nonregulatory standards for general aviation airport security. My administration has found that general aviation operators are keenly aware of and willing to individually enhance the security of their operations without government regulation. For example, AOPA developed the nationwide Airport Watch program, which includes warning signs for airports, informational literature, and a training videotape to educate pilots and airport employees about how the security of their airports and aircraft can be enhanced. Through the efforts and recommendations of the industry, we are making aviation a more secure and effective means of transportation.

Industry observers, think tanks, and some airlines have proposed a variety of management structures for FAA's air traffic control system. Do you believe air traffic control is a government function or should be spun off to the private sector?

Effective management of the air traffic control system is essential to ensuring the safety and security of all Americans. While there is room for improvement in our current system, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta has determined that air traffic control is a core capability of the federal government. Activities such as the contract tower program will continue, but by and large the air traffic control system will continue to be run by the federal government. I will continue to work with the FAA to improve the air traffic control system through advanced technology and comprehensive communications. FAA Administrator Blakey has said that the administration has no plans to privatize the air traffic control system.

General aviation is very sensitive to cost and access to the air traffic control system. How will you work to address these concerns of general aviation pilots?

With increased airport security, I understand that there are many additional costs associated with air travel. To help relieve some of this burden, I signed legislation that will increase federal funding of the air traffic control system. Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act authorizes \$59 billion for FAA programs through 2007—a 31-

percent increase in funding over the past four-year authorization. The Air Traffic Organization of FAA is working to reduce congestion and delays that impose efficiency costs on general aviation and commercial aviation alike. We are pursuing these improvements while avoiding increases in fees and taxes imposed on general aviation.

The administration recognizes that access issues are of major concern to the general aviation community, and is working with the general community to address these issues in ways that do not compromise homeland security. For example, the FAA has worked with AOPA to establish a Web-based notification system that includes graphical depictions of new airspace restrictions in response to concerns about restrictions imposed with little notice.

Several other countries operate using a system that charges based on each component of a flight, replacing the U.S. model that uses a transparent aviation fuel and ticket taxes to fund the aviation system. What is your view of how to fund the aviation system?

Our National Airspace System is predominantly funded through a combination of ticket taxes and segment charges on commercial flights, along with fuel charges on the entire aviation community. In addition, there is a substantial contribution to FAA expenses from the general revenues of the federal government. This combination of funding sources is meant to distribute costs among the various users of the airspace system. Reliance on such a combination is appropriate and should be continued.

During the next term you would be nominating an FAA administrator. What qualities would you look for in a nominee?

As president, I seek to appoint highly qualified, ethical candidates to top administrative posts. In picking appointees, I consider a person's experience as well as their relevant knowledge. Marion Blakey has served ably as my FAA administrator since September 2002. She oversees a very complex organization with crucial homeland security and public-safety responsibilities, and has worked closely with private and commercial aviation interests to ensure that our airspace is safe, efficient, and accessible.

AOPA



Kerry from page 79

Airports are essential in accessing the national air transportation system, but are often faced with the threat of closure or limits on access. Do you support general aviation airports as part of the national airport system?

I believe that general aviation airports are an integral part of the national airport system. General aviation contributes about \$100 billion to our economy annually and supports over a million jobs. I am aware that some airports have been closed to GA since September 11 and that others permit limited access to the airspace. Increased domestic security is now a fact of life, but I think that the government has a responsibility to see that the effect on businesses and individuals is minimized.

Post 9/11, some have singled out general aviation, in comparison to other transportation modes, as a security concern. How do you view general aviation security?

All modes of transportation have become security concerns since September 11. Aviation is the obvious concern, but we've also addressed port security and have finally started to look at transit and rail. The challenge we face is finding the right balance between security, individual rights, and economic interests. We can't mandate rules that would stifle economic growth or infringe on civil liberties, but we also need to take common-sense steps to make the security improvements that can help prevent another 9/11. I know that

AOPA has worked with the Transportation Security Administration to develop a system to help alert authorities to suspicious activity around GA airports. This kind of public-private partnership is necessary since there are well over 10,000 GA airports across the country.

Industry observers, think tanks, and some airlines have proposed a variety of management structures for the FAA's air traffic control system. Do you believe air traffic control is a government function or should be spun off to the private sector?

I oppose privatizing the air traffic control system. I believe air traffic control is a national security concern that should be handled by the government.

General aviation is very sensitive to cost and access to the air traffic control system. How will you work to address these concerns of general aviation pilots?

I believe that government agencies that regulate sectors of the economy have a responsibility to ensure that the concerns of those affected are heard when policy makers review rules or propose new ones. I'm aware that the GA community is sensitive to airspace access and business-related costs, and my administration will address these concerns inclusively.

Several other countries operate using a system that charges based on each component of a flight, replacing the U.S. model that uses a transparent aviation fuel and ticket taxes to fund the aviation system. What is your view of how to fund the aviation system?

I support the current funding system, in which aviation-related taxes are placed into trust funds that pay for airport infrastructure improvements, air traffic control, and security.

During the next term you would be nominating an FAA administrator. What qualities would you look for in a nominee?

I'll be looking for the same qualities in all my agency nominees: honesty, integrity, experience in the public and private sectors, and strong leadership skills.

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