



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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March 14, 2006

Honorable Steve Murphy
Chairman
Senate Transportation Committee
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Room 306
St. Paul, MN 55155-1606

Re: SF 2683 (Willmar airport repayment to airports fund requirement prohibited)

Dear Chairman Murphy:

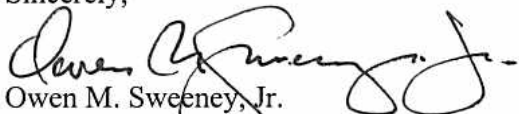
On behalf of the more than 7,600 Minnesota members – of 407,000 members nationwide – of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), we are writing to express our strong opposition to SF 2683, which prohibits the Commissioner of Transportation from requiring the city of Willmar to repay the state airports fund for the state share of acquisition costs of land that was previously used for aviation purposes.

The state airport fund was authorized in order to allow the Aeronautics Office of the Minnesota Department of Transportation to assist local communities in the funding of general aviation airport development projects. As such, we believe all proceeds disbursed from this account should be used solely for airport infrastructure projects and no other purpose.

We are aware that the City of Willmar is developing a “replacement” airport and plans to use the old airport property for an alternative use. While we are supportive of construction of the new airport, we believe very strongly that all proceeds and funds that were received by the city from the state must be used for development of the new airport. If the city determines that they do not wish to reinvest these state funds into the new airport facility, the city should be required to repay the funds to the State of Minnesota so that these monies may be used to develop other general aviation airports in the state. As it is, there is seldom adequate funding available each year to fulfill the demand for general aviation airport development projects in Minnesota. Therefore, every dollar counts and is critical. Every government agency eligible for these funds should be treated equally and are required to follow established state requirements. There should be no exceptions. Any agency that does not follow these state requirements should be required to repay funds received from the state to the state or be restricted from receiving future allocations of airport development monies.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our comments. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact AOPA’s Great Lakes Regional Representative Bill Blake at (309) 692-7653.

Sincerely,



Owen M. Sweeney, Jr.
Manager, State & Local Government Affairs

cc: Senator Dean Johnson
Raymond Rought, Director, Aeronautics and Aviation, DOT
Bill Blake, AOPA Great Lakes Regional Representative