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December 08, 2003

The Honorable Marion C. Blakey
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Blakey:

I am writing to request that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) hold public meetings to fully assess the potential impact of its National Air Tour Safety Standards notice of proposed rulemaking (Docket No. FAA-1998-4521).

This NRPM could have devastating effects on over 400,000 general aviation pilots and professionals who participate in charitable sightseeing events and tours under FAR Part 91. I am concerned that the FAA has failed to consider the true impact of this proposal on the general aviation community and contend that conducting public meetings will give FAA officials the opportunity to hear directly from those most affected.

Following the release of the proposal, the general aviation community responded that this proposed rule would have an adverse impact on thousands of general aviation pilots and small aviation businesses.

The FAA's proposal to increase the minimum flight time for private pilots participating in charitable sightseeing events from 200 hours to 500 hours reduces the pool of available pilots to help charity and fundraising flights. It is important that the FAA evaluate this by hearing directly from the general aviation community in a public forum.

In addition to the charity flights issue, I am also concerned that the sightseeing elements of the proposed rule will adversely affect the sightseeing business. Through the FAA's own admission, the proposed rule will result in hundreds of small sightseeing operations going out of business. Many of these companies are also involved in flight training, a segment of the general aviation community that continues to face economic hardships. Again, I urge the FAA to provide these entities the opportunity to explain firsthand how the proposal affects their operations and to determine the accuracy of the FAA's analysis of the proposal.

The NPRM touched at a foundational use of general aviation aircraft. Because of the potential adverse impact of this NPRM on thousands of general aviation pilots and businesses, it is incumbent upon the FAA to ensure that the proposed rule and its impact are thoroughly evaluated. A series of public meetings in as excellent mechanism to assist the FAA in its analysis of the affected user community.

I appreciate your cooperation and look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Ginny Brown-Waite
Member of Congress

GBW:ajw