



National Pilot Alert

Dear Concerned Pilot

On only a handful of occasions in our 60 year history AOPA has sent an individual letter to our almost 360,000 members asking for help. In fact, only twice in the last ten years have we asked each and every one of you to become personally involved in an issue that will affect the future of general aviation. You may remember our last call to action over product liability reform. We won that battle, but we are now faced with another that is just as daunting.

I'm writing to you and your fellow AOPA members today to ask for your special assistance with our efforts to see that aviation in America finally receives the funding it so rightly deserves- instead of new user fees or a tax increase. For decades Congress has used the aviation trust fund to hide the billions of dollars of pork-barrel spending increases it passes each year. As you know, this constant desire to spend more money will make it tougher and tougher to fight user fees every year.

Last year, with your help, Chairman Shuster and Rep. Oberstar were able to guide legislation, H.R. 1000, to "unlock" the aviation trust fund, through the turbulent waters of the House of Representatives. In fact, it passed by an overwhelming margin of 316-110. However, when the bill got to the Senate things suddenly went wrong.

The Senate's bill was dramatically different from the legislation that passed the House. Not only did the Senate's bill not "unlock" the aviation trust fund, it proposed to completely eliminate the \$3.4 billion in annual funding from the U.S. Treasury's general fund that supports 30% of the FAA's budget. Should the Senate bill be adopted we would again be left with systems and programs that are outdated and unfunded improvements at general aviation airports. Furthermore, the Senate's measure practically guarantees either the implementation of new user fees or a tax increase.

I am asking you to immediately write to your members of the Senate listed below. Urge them to support the FAA Reauthorization bill, H.R. 1000, as it was passed in the House of Representatives. Insist that they not cut the general fund contribution that supports 30% of the FAA's budget. Tell them to "unlock" the trust fund so the \$57.3 billion dollars sitting inside can be used to modernize our aging airway system. Demand that they start spending the aviation trust fund on what it was designed for: Aviation!

This is not a unique concept. Almost all Senators fully supported a similar 1998 decision to fully spend gas taxes on highways and transit systems. Why are highways and bus lines more important than aviation safety? So far, most of the same Senators have said "no" to modernizing our aviation system, but with your help we can still win this issue.

The key ingredient for our success this time will be our ability to generate mail, and lots of it. The grassroots level is where we are going to win this fight, and it is going to be the effort that you and I put forth that is going to put us over the top.

Before writing, read about the details of H.R. 1000, the FAA Reauthorization bill, which are described inside. Then, please write to the Senators listed below and tell them that now is the time to ensure that aviation receives proper funding for decades to come.

The addresses for your Senators are:

The Honorable Phil Gramm
The United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchinson
The United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Sincerely,

Phil Boyer

P.S. Please send me a copy of your letter to AOPA, 421 Aviation Way, Frederick, MD 21701-4798



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Why do your senators think highways are more important than runways?

What we are up against ...

- The Senate refuses to fully spend the taxes that pilots and aircraft owners pay every year to support aviation.
- While the FAA Reauthorization (H.R. 1000), to "unlock" the trust fund, received overwhelming support in the House of Representatives the proposal has received stiff opposition from members of the Senate.
- In fact, Senators who voted in 1998 to change the way the Nation's highways and transit systems are funded now oppose a similar model designed for aviation. *Why?*
- The Senate took away \$3.4 billion of general taxpayer funds that since 1970 have traditionally been used to fund the government's use of ATC services. Should their proposal pass, a tax increase or user fees will be inevitable.
- If we do not "unlock" the trust fund the Administration will once again try and force user fees down the throats of the general aviation community, a goal it has had since 1995.
- Some airlines now want to privatize the air traffic control system and fund it through user fees. That way they can wield power over it and squeeze out the general aviation pilot. Not using the trust fund for what it was designed for enhances their argument and almost guarantees a tax increase or new user fees.

**We need your help in contacting
your Senators now!**

How this helps you ...

- If the Senate accepts the House version of the FAA Reauthorization bill the Aviation Trust Fund would finally be "unlocked" and a total of \$57.35 billion could be spent on the FAA over four years. That's \$14.3 billion more than Congress would have approved had the trust fund not been taken off budget.
- The House version would also continue the annual \$3.4 billion general fund contribution to the FAA, thereby eliminating the need for user fees or a tax increase.
- The Aviation Trust Fund is partially funded by taxes AOPA members pay on aviation fuel. This bill would assure the money is spent after it is collected instead of sitting in the Trust Fund unused.
- The long overdue modernization of Flight Service Stations, improvements to general aviation airports and greater use of GPS for navigation and precision approaches could finally be implemented.
- Unlocking the trust fund would put an end to the annual drumbeat for user fees, stop the proposals of some airlines to take over the air traffic control system, and halt other proposals designed to squeeze more money out of pilots.

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Target Points

Heading: **The Hon.** (*your senator's name here*)
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

- Urge them to support the House version of H.R. 1000 currently in conference committee that will "unlock" the Aviation Trust Fund.
- Tell them not to eliminate the \$3.4 billion annual general fund contribution that comprises 30% of the FAA's budget.
- The Trust Fund is financed by taxes paid by aviation users, including the fuel tax you pay. The money should be spent promptly on aviation needs, not left to build up in a surplus.
- Are highways and transit more important than runways? Ask them why, if they voted for the 1998 highway and transit bill, they cannot support a similar model for aviation.
- Although neither of your Senators may serve on the conference committee, ask them speak to those Senators that do. Tell them that the House approach, which is good enough for highways and transit systems, is good enough for aviation.
- (Consider including information about your flying experience or your local airport. Keep the letter to one page and stick to the subject.)

What you can do to help ...

Please take a minute today to write both of your U.S. Senators. Their addresses are listed in my letter on the front page. And please send a copy of your letters to me, **Phil Boyer, at AOPA, 421 Aviation Way, Frederick, MD 21701-4798**

PLEASE CONTACT YOUR SENATORS LISTED ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE BEFORE MARCH 1st... tell them to "unlock" the aviation trust fund now!

ASK THEM... to speak to Senators who are on the conference committee and encourage them to protect general aviation in America by adopting the House provisions.

Pilots make up only a small percentage of the general population. It is critical that we let our elected officials know how we feel on issues effecting general aviation. Don't wait for someone else to do it.

Write Today!

A personal communication from a constituent is one of the most effective methods of influencing members of the Senate!

Here are a few things to keep in mind when you write:

Keep it short, simple and clear. Limit yourself to this subject, and one page. Make sure your name, address and phone number are printed clearly on the letter.

Personalize and localize the issue. Write on your business or personal letterhead. Stress the effects on you and on aviation in your hometown.

While email seems like a logical way to contact your Senators, **most do not respond to email.** In fact, one Senator specifically told an AOPA member that they are unable to respond to email.

Request specific action. This is the whole point! Clearly state what you want your Senator to do.