



July 24, 2015



The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



The Honorable Jim Inhofe
United States Senate
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Boxer
United States Senate
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



Senators McConnell, Reid, Inhofe, and Boxer:



As representatives of tens of thousands of individuals and companies from all segments of the aviation community, including general aviation pilots, aircraft owners, operators, businesses that utilize aircraft, mechanics, manufacturers, physicians, pilot unions, and state aviation officials, we are writing to express our strong support for the Manchin-Boozman amendment to H.R. 22.

General aviation has been losing an average of 6,000 pilots per year over the past 10 years, and this critically important amendment includes provisions that will allow general aviation to grow and prosper while affording important protections to pilots and aircraft operators.

General aviation is an important American industry that comprises all flying outside of military and airline operations. Each year it contributes \$219 billion to the U.S. economy, moves 170 million passengers, and supports 1.1 million jobs. General aviation activity takes place from 5,200 public-use airports, including 3,380 of which are part of the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems and are eligible to receive federal funding, as well as some 13,000 privately owned landing facilities.

As you know, this amendment would make improvements to the Pilot's Bill of Rights (Public Law 112-153) that overwhelmingly passed the Senate and the House a few years ago by addressing a number of issues important to all segments of general aviation. These issues include expanding upon a current and successful FAA third-class medical exemption for certain general aviation pilots, urging expediting updates to the FAA's Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) program to ensure pilots receive critical safety information as part of their preflight preparation and providing protections to volunteer pilots who fly in the public interest.

Third-class medical reform remains a pivotal issue for general aviation and its future. The FAA's medical certification system has evolved into an onerous and costly one which provides little, if any, benefit to most general aviation pilots. The FAA recognized that fact more than 10 years ago when it created the Sport Pilot standard of medical certification, which allows pilots to operate light sport aircraft without obtaining a third-class medical certificate. It has been utilized safely and effectively by thousands of pilots flying tens of thousands of hours.

This amendment stands to reduce barriers to medical certification in a manner that allows for the continued safe operation of general aviation aircraft while providing cost savings to both the FAA and the general aviation community. An Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association analysis estimates today's total average cost of obtaining a third-class medical certificate to be \$241. Coupled with an estimate of 230,250 pilots who could be expected to take advantage of the bill's provisions, pilots could save \$20.4 million every year. A conservative estimate also shows an annual savings of \$2.49 million to the FAA. The money saved by reforming the third-class medical process could be used in ways that have the potential to do far more to improve safety, including increased proficiency flying, attaining additional ratings, and installing new safety equipment on aircraft.



The original Pilot's Bill of Rights provided important protections to pilots and this amendment stands to expand on them. The FAA's NOTAM system transmits important safety of flight information to pilots, and it is crucial that the FAA continue to provide that service and information in a timely and relevant manner. Additionally, pilots who volunteer their time and aircraft to provide public benefit flights through non-profit organizations deliver valuable services to the community and the nation. Such public benefit flights provide no-cost transportation to patients receiving specialized medical treatment, deliver humanitarian aid, and assist in disaster relief efforts. The provisions in this amendment will make it easier for these organizations and pilots to continue offering these important flights.

This amendment will help ensure the future sustainability of our industry and its valuable contributions to the nation's economy and transportation system.