



**Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association  
U.S. House Committee on Transportation and  
Infrastructure  
Subcommittee on Aviation**

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**Hearing on: *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024:*  
*Stakeholder Perspectives on Implementation One Year Later***

**Submitted by:**

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Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association**

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Chairman Nehls, Ranking Member Cohen, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to provide the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association's (AOPA) perspective on the implementation of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.

AOPA is the world's largest aviation membership organization, representing General Aviation interests of more than 300,000 aircraft owners and pilots across the country. General Aviation consists of all operations that are not military or commercial. These include operations for personal use, recreational, business, medevac, law enforcement, agriculture, firefighting, disaster assistance, just to name a few. Our members operate at airports in thousands of communities in every State and support the local economies in these areas.

The General Aviation fleet in the United States is the largest in the world and consists of well over 200,000 active aircraft including piston, turbine, and jets. To help illustrate the enormous size of this aviation sector, in comparison, the U.S. commercial airline fleet has about 6,000 airplanes.

For 86 years, AOPA has stayed true to its mission of protecting the freedom to fly and I am proud and humbled to be only the 6th President serving the Association since its inception in 1939. Guiding, protecting, and promoting this uniquely American experience, so we can pass it along, better than we received it, to the next generation of aviators.

I would like to commend Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen and all members of the Committee for the bipartisan work in passing a 5-year FAA reauthorization in the last Congress.

The FAA reauthorization Act of 2024, Public Law 118-63, is both historic and transformative for the GA industry, as it included the first ever General Aviation title which gives undivided attention to programs and policies that directly impact the unique needs of aircraft owners and pilots.

This hearing is timely given the efforts being put forward to implement provisions included in last year's FAA Reauthorization, as well as the recent announcement by President Trump and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy calling for a completely new and modern air traffic control system.

AOPA is a member of the Modern Skies Coalition, which represents all sectors of the aviation industry including airlines, general aviation, airports, labor, and manufacturers. The coalition strongly supports this modernization effort, and we look forward to collaborating with the Committee, Congress, and the Administration to make this proposal a reality.

Having the entire aviation industry behind this effort is both important and unique. The time to upgrade this system is now and we applaud the downpayment this Committee and the House of Representatives put forward in the recent House passed Budget Reconciliation bill, commonly referred to as the "One Big Beautiful Bill Act."

The leadership this Committee has shown in this area of air traffic control modernization is commendable, appreciated, and needed. Developing and deploying a new air traffic control system will require constant leadership, vigilance, accountability, milestones, benchmarking, incentives, and penalties if necessary. We cannot fail in getting this done.

Procurement and acquisition processes also need to be streamlined, and this effort will also require transparency and strong oversight. With the Trump Administration, Congress, and the entire aviation industry unified, we can and must get this done. Ensuring the FAA has the most updated equipment and well-trained controllers is vital to maintaining the safest, largest, and most complex system in the world.

And without a doubt, we do have the safest aviation system in the world, and it has never been safer. But that does not mean it cannot be safer than it is today. And we owe it to all who utilize this national airspace system to make it as safe as it can be and to invest in the technology and the staffing it requires to achieve that.

## **IMPACT OF GENERAL AVIATION**

General aviation in the United States provides a significant economic impact both nationally and to the communities in which we all live – a \$339 billion dollar industry supporting more than 1.3 million jobs.

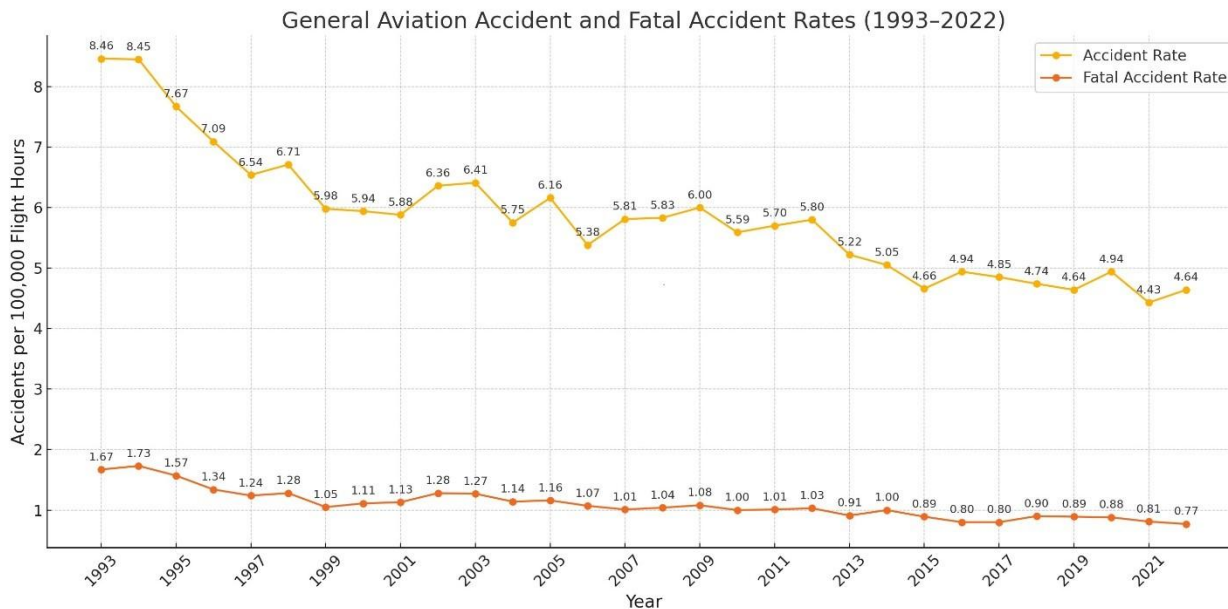
Through the network of more than 5,000 public-use airports across the country as well as over 14,000 privately owned landing facilities, heliports, and airstrips nationwide, general aviation is an integral part of our nation's transportation system.

As I mentioned earlier, General Aviation also provides significant and critical public benefits. These vital operations include emergency medical personnel and supplies delivery, disaster relief and recovery, search and rescue, humanitarian assistance, law enforcement, agricultural aviation activities, and much, much more.

## **GENERAL AVIATION SAFETY**

While aircraft accidents often make headline news, what does not is the enormous size and scope of General Aviation, which comprises more than twenty-six million flight hours per year, representing more than thirty million takeoffs and landings by hundreds of thousands of General Aviation pilots.

The AOPA Air Safety Institute publishes safety data annually, which reviews General Aviation accidents and analyzes trends in the data. In fact, General Aviation has seen a declining accident and fatality rate for more than 30 years. Since the early 1990s, the accident rate has dropped 45 percent, and the rate of fatal accidents has fallen even more—55 percent.



The graph shows the total accident and fatal accident rates for general aviation since 1993. Source: AOPA Air Safety Institute and National Transportation Safety Board.

According to the most recent FAA General Aviation and Part 135 Activity survey, there were more than 214,000 active General Aviation aircraft in the fleet. The FAA calculates that General Aviation pilots collectively fly about 28.5 million hours each year—more than 78,000 hours per day.

At AOPA, we are always working to educate and inform pilots to further improve aviation safety. On April 1<sup>st</sup>, the AOPA Air Safety Institute—with support from more than two dozen other organizations and the FAA—launched the National Pause for General Aviation Safety. Over a six-month period, pilots are being asked to take a timeout to focus on safety and review a variety of videos, courses, and articles that cover every type of GA flying. Pilots are encouraged to visit [GAsafe.org](https://www.GAsafe.org) to learn more.

## **FAA REAUTHORIZATION IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementing the provisions from the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act is imperative to address the challenges facing the aviation industry and I will briefly discuss the status and implementation of a number of key provisions that directly and positively impact General Aviation.

## **PILOT AND AIRCRAFT PRIVACY**

Pilot and aircraft privacy is an important issue. As you know, FAA's 2020 Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (ADS-B) out mandate required pilots flying in most controlled airspace to equip their aircraft with this safety enhancing technology. More than 112,000 General Aviation aircraft are now equipped at a direct cost of more than half a billion dollars.

ADS-B out is an aviation surveillance technology that identifies the position of an aircraft and regularly broadcasts its position to controllers and other aircraft that have an ADS-B in receiver. The broadcast also provides altitude, speed, direction, and the aircraft's N-number. AOPA fully supported the 2020 mandate as we were assured ADS-B data would only be used to improve air traffic safety and airspace efficiency.

Unfortunately, we are now seeing ADS-B data being used for many other non-safety related areas including enforcement actions, frivolous lawsuits where complainants are suing for nuisance, trespass, and intentional infliction of emotional distress for aircraft flying in full compliance with FAA requirements.

Pilots are now being forced to pay expensive legal fees to defend themselves against these questionable enforcement actions and frivolous lawsuits.

Moreover, a cottage industry has emerged, and companies are now contracting with public-use airports to collect fees from pilots by gleaning ADS-B data, specifically the N number and then running it against the FAA's aircraft registry to obtain the name and address of the pilot.

These actions bring numerous safety and individual privacy concerns and are a strong deterrent for other pilots to equip with this safety technology.

In Montana, legislation to prohibit the use of ADS-B data for fee collection was recently signed into law by the governor. Similar legislation was also introduced in Minnesota. In order to avoid a patchwork of laws across the country, we strongly encourage the Committee to act in developing a national policy that ensures ADS-B data is not used for fee collection but used for its intended purpose, air traffic safety and airspace efficiencies.

To also help address the privacy concerns of aircraft owners, this committee included a key provision, section 803, in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The act required the FAA administrator to establish, no later than 2 years after enactment, a procedure for a private aircraft owner or operator to withhold from broad dissemination or display by the FAA, the registration number and other similar identifiable data such as personally identifiable information of the aircraft owner or operator.



In response to section 803, the FAA announced this past March that the Civil Aviation Registry Electronic Services (CARES) system now allows aircraft owners to voluntarily request that their name and contact information be withheld from public access. This is a good step forward and we applaud the Committee for including this provision in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 and the FAA's prompt action.

## **PRICING AND FEE TRANSPARENCY**

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct a study on the efforts of Fixed Based Operators (FBOs) to meet their voluntary commitment to improve the online transparency of prices and fees for all aircraft. AOPA has routinely heard from pilots across the country who are frustrated when they are levied with unexpected fees or are required to submit their N number in order to find out what they will be charged.

Most airports and FBOs across the country provide services to pilots at a fair and reasonable price. But for years, we have received complaints nearly every day from pilots being charged with egregious fee pricing.

The types of fees charged to pilots by some FBOs may include tie-down fees, overnight parking fees, facility fees, infrastructure fees, access fees, security fees, handling fees, habitat fees, and special event fees. Some of these fees may be waived with the purchase of fuel but pilots are simply asking for fair and reasonable fees and prices, in conformance with FAA grant assurance requirements.

AOPA led a voluntary industry campaign known as “Know Before You Go” to encourage FBOs to make their fees publicly available and while a vast majority of FBOs now openly disclose their pricing, many still do not.

We are hopeful the GAO will reach out to AOPA as it develops its report, as required by the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, to assess industry compliance with this voluntary program. The report is due to Congress later this year.

In 2024, Signature Aviation, the largest FBO chain in the United States with more than 130 locations and owned by a private equity firm took a positive step forward in responding to AOPA's call for fair and reasonable fees by lowering and standardizing its handling fees for piston aircraft at nearly all its locations. We applaud this effort and hope to see other large chain FBOs develop similar fair and reasonable pricing models for all non-commercial operators, regardless of aircraft type.

As you know, during last year's FAA Reauthorization process, AOPA was joined by nearly six hundred aviation organizations across the country in calling for fair and reasonable FBO fees in conformance with current FAA requirements. Unfortunately, this bipartisan commonsense amendment, offered by Representative Jay Obernolte (R-CA) and Representative Matt Cartwright (D-PA), was tabled in the Rules Committee.

We understand airports have financial needs, but we also believe they should be held accountable to FAA grant assurances that require any fees collected, either by an airport or a FBO, to be fair and reasonable.

## **EXPANSION OF BASICMED**

AOPA has and continues to advocate tirelessly for medical reform. We are pleased the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 includes the expansion of BasicMed (section 828). The law Increased the maximum certified takeoff weight of a covered aircraft to 12,500 pounds (up from 6,000 pounds), increased the number of allowable passengers in a covered aircraft to six (up from five), and increased the allowable number of seats in a covered aircraft to seven (up from six). Since the program's inception in 2017, more than 90,000 pilots have qualified to safely fly with BasicMed privileges. The FAA's final rule implementing the expansion of BasicMed went into effect on November 18, 2024.

It is important to point out that in its congressionally mandated reports, the FAA concluded BasicMed has no statistically significant impact on safety when comparing pilots flying under BasicMed to those with a third-class medical certificate.

Interestingly enough, many countries, large and small, have medical standards that, similar to BasicMed, allow licensed medical physician to conduct a physical exam on private pilots. Moreover, Mexico, The Bahamas, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau all authorize private pilots to fly with BasicMed

privileges. AOPA continues to work to expand acceptance of BasicMed to Canada and appreciates the Committee's inclusion of language in the FAA Reauthorization encouraging the FAA to pursue this issue with Canada.

We also appreciate the Committee including a provision requiring the FAA to stand up an Aviation Medical Working Group to develop recommendations intended to modernize the agency's medical processes and systems for pilots. This is an area that needs significant attention, especially the need to address extensive delays many pilots are experiencing with their medical applications. I am pleased, however, to report that the FAA has stood up this Working Group, as outlined in the FAA Reauthorization, and I commend the leadership of Federal Air Surgeon, Susan Northrup, for tackling this issue head on.

## **EXPIRATION DATE ON A FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATE**

Another provision that was fully supported by AOPA is the expiration date on a flight instructor certificate. The FAA Administrator was directed to issue a final rule for the rulemaking activity titled 'Removal of the Expiration Date on a Flight Instructor Certificate' no later than 18 months after enactment. The final rule went into effect on December 01, 2024, removing the expiration date from flight instructor certificates, while maintaining recurrency and recent experience requirements.

## **ISSUANCE OF LETTERS OF AUTHORIZATION TO AIRMEN**

As a result of section 806 of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, championed by Chairman Graves, the FAA has updated its guidance on authorizations to fly piston warbird airplanes by giving certain experienced pilots an easier path to add type-specific privileges. This is a positive step for this historical and highly active segment of General Aviation.

## **ELIMINATE AIRCRAFT REGISTRATION BACKLOG**

In recent years, the FAA's aircraft registration system caused significant delays with a chronic backlog of aircraft registration hitting a peak of 190 days in 2022. We appreciate the leadership of this Committee by including language in the FAA Reauthorization Act requiring the FAA to take necessary actions to reduce the aircraft registration backlog at the Civil Aviation Registry. The FAA recently testified that it has addressed the backlog and is now processing applications within an average of ten business days or less.

## **UNLEADED FUEL AND EAGLE INITIATIVE**

As you know, the FAA and industry stakeholders representing every corner of aviation have a vested interest in the safe transition to unleaded fuel for general aviation aircraft. Working together through the FAA and industry Eliminate Aviation Gasoline Lead Emissions (EAGLE) initiative, our goal is to remove lead from all aviation fuel no later than December 31, 2030.

However, until there is a viable unleaded fuel available fleet wide, it is imperative that 100LL (low lead) fuel remain available. We appreciate the leadership of this Committee for including a provision in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 that requires airports that offered 100LL aviation gasoline for sale in 2022 to continue offering the sale of 100LL until 2030 or the date on which the FAA certifies an unleaded aviation gasoline alternative is available for purchase or use by all GA aircraft operators.

### **MODERNIZATION OF SPECIAL AIRWORTHINESS CERTIFICATES (MOSAIC)**

The expansion of light sport aircraft and sport pilot privileges has been a top priority for AOPA and the general aviation community. The FAA's Modernization of Special Airworthiness Certificates (MOSAIC) initiative was introduced in July 2023, and the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 requires the FAA to issue a final rule for MOSAIC, no later than 2 years after enactment. The FAA is currently reviewing more than 1,300 comments and is expected to issue a final rule in mid- 2025, which if issued in July would meet the 2-year reauthorization requirement. We are very encouraged and supportive of this effort.

### **DEVELOPMENT OF PORTABLE LOW-COST VOLUNTARY ADS-B**

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 also requires the FAA Administrator to prepare a report no later than 2 years after enactment on the development of a suitable position reporting system for voluntary use in covered airspace to facilitate traffic awareness and solicit advice from industry groups including pilots and aircraft owners.

We are aware the FAA is currently evaluating some electronic conspicuity (EC) devices (low-power ADS-B Out), and we are expecting a decision this year as to whether they and the FCC will approve of their use in the US.

## **CONCLUSION**

As we look to the future, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 sets us on the right path to improve the safety and efficiency of our national airspace system. This historic legislation, with the first ever title dedicated to General Aviation, will benefit aircraft owners and pilots for years to come.

We appreciate the leadership of this Committee, FAA Acting Administrator Chris Rocheleau, and those at the FAA that have had a hand in implementing many of these important provisions in a timely manner.

I would like to thank the Subcommittee again for holding this important hearing and providing me with the opportunity to share AOPA's perspective on the status and implementation of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024.