

## **WRITE YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS REGARDING PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF GENERAL AVIATION**

February 20, 2009

### ***What's at Issue***

Late last year, Congress held a series of hearings to determine whether the Big Three auto manufacturers, Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler, warranted federal assistance due to their companies' financial struggles. During one hearing, Members of Congress blasted the three testifying CEOs for using private aircraft to travel to the hearing when asking Congress for billions of dollars in federal assistance. As a result, provisions were included in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate bills that would have required companies receiving federal funding to divest themselves of corporate aircraft. While the legislation wasn't passed in either chamber, the Bush administration released Troubled Asset Relief Act (TARP) funds from the U.S. Treasury to General Motors and Chrysler. The terms of the loan included provisions prohibiting the purchase or lease of private aircraft.

### ***Why It's Important***

The recently passed \$787 billion economic stimulus package, in addition to the \$700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Act of 2008 were passed to aid the ailing economy while sustaining or creating jobs. The decision by lawmakers to sever general aviation industry jobs advertently or inadvertently because the Big Three automakers flew corporate aircraft to Washington, D.C. for committee hearings has become a problem for the industry. Public perception is that general aviation or business aircraft are strictly luxury assets, contrary to the truth which is that general aviation plays a vital role in the state of the American economy. The general aviation industry must band together to educate lawmakers and the public about the role it plays in our economy and remind them that we too are struggling amidst our nation's ailing financial situation.

### ***What to Do***

[Contact your Members of Congress by visiting NATA's Legislative Action Center.](#) NATA's Legislative Action Center provides association members with a quick and easy way to email letters directly to Members of Congress in their state. A form letter is attached or you may wish to use the following talking points:

#### General Aviation Facts:

- There are approximately 211,500 general aviation aircraft operating in the U.S. These aircraft have access to over 5,000 public-access airports and landing facilities. Only 429 of these airports are served by scheduled airlines.
- In 2007, general aviation flew 27.7 million hours, carrying 166 million passengers annually and contributed \$150 billion to the U.S. economy.
- There are more than 3,200 fixed base operators (FBOs) in the U.S. FBOs provide fuel and other products and services to pilots of general aviation aircraft. Other services include maintenance, aircraft storage, flight training, and on-demand charter services.

OVER...

(What to Do Continued)

- There are 3,000 on-demand air taxi operators in the U.S. operating more than 11,000 aircraft. Ninety percent of these operators are small businesses as defined by the Small Business Administration, owning fewer than 10 aircraft and employing fewer than 25 employees. Air taxi flights include aeromedical services, air cargo operations and air tour operators.
- There are 4,000 FAA-certificated aircraft repair stations in the U.S.
- There are 3,200 U.S.-based flight-training schools. These schools, not the military, are now the primary source for new airline pilots in the U.S.

Benefits of GA:

- General aviation serves the public by accessing rural areas, providing efficient transportation that the airlines, especially as they cut back on routes, can't provide.
- Chartering an aircraft on a government-licensed on-demand air carrier offers corporations unparalleled speed and access at far lower costs than any form of ownership.

Employment:

- More than 1.265 million jobs have been created by the general aviation industry, many of which are supported by these small aviation businesses and play a critical role in our American economy. These jobs are placed at significant risk if the federal government bars corporations from using their services.

Aircraft:

- The General Aviation Manufacturers Association announced that 2008 year-end worldwide shipments of general aviation airplanes decreased for the first time in five years.
- Aircraft shipments declined with 2008 year-end. Worldwide shipments of general aviation airplanes are down 7.1percent, versus 2007's total of 4,272 airplanes.

## ***NATA Position***

NATA strongly believes that its members must be outspoken on the benefits of general aviation. Unfortunate incidents have resulted in our need to speak out not only on the state of the industry during these troubling economic times, but also to describe the impact the industry has on our nation of which the public and even Congress may not be aware.

## ***Status***

Continued efforts should be made to ensure a positive message is being circulated about the general aviation industry. There isn't anyone better to help tackle this task than you!

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