



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION
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Phil Boyer
President

May 31, 2007

The Honorable Charlie Crist
State of Florida
The Capitol
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0001

Re: Request for signature on HB985

Dear Governor Crist:

As President of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), I represent the general aviation interests of more than 411,000 pilots nationwide – including 32,336 in Florida – and I am writing to urge you to sign House Bill 985. This bill will provide significant state support to community airports across Florida. We are pleased that the state legislature, in adopting this legislation, has shown its appreciation of the value of general aviation to Florida, and hope you will confirm that support by signing the bill into law.

The Federal Airport Improvement Program (AIP) currently covers 95% of eligible costs for airport improvements. The remaining share is usually divided evenly between the state and the local government that sponsors the airport. Unfortunately, many local governments often have trouble meeting even that level of capital funding. House Bill 985 will raise the current state match from 50% to 80%, allowing more local governments to receive federal funds. This additional state support will allow Florida to better leverage federal matching dollars for continued enhancement of Florida's air transportation system.

In addition, HB985 will give the Florida Department of Transportation the ability to grant State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) loans to an airport for capital projects damaged during an official state emergency. These loans are crucial to begin rebuilding the infrastructure of airports due to damage from disasters while the airports wait on money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

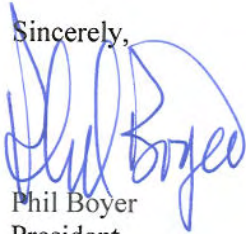
HB985 also provides for four general aviation reliever airports to be added to the state's Strategic Intermodal System (SIS) of transportation, which can provide for more support from the state in the future for these airports. One of the most important issues facing the general aviation industry today is the adequate development and maintenance of our airport infrastructure, by recognizing that these airports are an integral part of Florida's transportation system will serve the state well for future growth and mobility issues.

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General aviation is a vital element of Florida's economy. Each year, general aviation activity in your state produces \$2.3 billion in economic activity, employees over 23,000 state residents, and adds \$680 million in payroll. Airports also provide vital services to non-aviation entities throughout Florida including individuals, families, churches, hospitals, law enforcement and numerous small businesses. From transporting people who need specialized medical care, but are not served by commercial flights, to transporting an organ for donation, to disaster relief, general aviation meets vital health and public safety needs. I applaud Florida's efforts in committing to provide more enhancements to the state's air transportation system and in turn bring additional positive benefit to the state's economy.

AOPA members and I appreciate your consideration of this important legislation and I hope that you will sign this legislation once it arrives on your desk. Should you have any questions or require additional information from AOPA, please do not hesitate to contact me personally.

Sincerely,



Phil Boyer
President