



**AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION**

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September 4, 2007

The Honorable Henry M. Michaux, Jr., Senior Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Rick Glazier, Co-Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Education

The Honorable Verla Insko, Co-Chair  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

North Carolina House of Representatives  
Legislative Building  
16 West Jones Street  
Raleigh, NC 27601

RE: Planned Closing of Horace Williams Airport

Dear Representatives Michaux, Glazier, and Insko:

Thank you for taking the time during the General Assembly's busy legislative session to conduct a hearing and issue a report on the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's plans to close Horace Williams Airport. The more than 10,000 North Carolina members and 413,000 members nationwide of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association appreciate your continued interest in this important airport.

At your joint hearing on the impact of the University's planned closure of the airport, you heard compelling testimony on why Horace Williams Airport must be preserved. We were pleased to learn that the Joint Subcommittee's Report of August 1 discussed several important findings about the importance of the airport to the AHEC program and the University, as well as the need to weigh the cost of a new airport against the cost of land for the Carolina North project.

We were also pleased to see that the Joint Subcommittees have recommended that:

*"The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill should continue to operate the Horace Williams Airport and continue air transportation support for the Area Health Education Center (AHEC) and the public from that location until a replacement facility that is accessible to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill becomes operational, as provided by Session Law 2004-124. The Departments of Administration and Transportation should assist the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as needed to secure a replacement facility."*


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Before the University takes any irrevocable action in closing the airport, it is imperative that all of the consequences be carefully weighed. Although the General Assembly has twice voted to study the impact of closure, no study has been conducted, and this year's hearing was the first significant effort to understand these issues. Nonetheless, the University seems determined to move forward, and has given no indication that it is willing to heed the will of the Legislature. Their idea of a replacement facility accessible to Chapel Hill is the construction of hangars and the conduct of AHEC flights at Raleigh Durham International Airport. In addition to the distance from Chapel Hill, the operational challenges presented by a major air carrier airport will inevitably create challenges to AHEC operations that will much diminish the effectiveness of that important program.

As legislative leaders and senior appropriators, we encourage you to do all in your power to let the University Administration know that they should take no action that would precipitate the closure of Horace Williams. In particular, we encourage you to tell the University not to move forward with its plans to construct hangars for the AHEC program at Raleigh-Durham Airport in preparation for closing Horace Williams.

Thank you again for your interest in this issue. We remain confident that a practical solution can be found that protects this vital transportation facility, while allowing the University to pursue its goals for Carolina North.

Very truly yours,

  
Gregory Becoraro  
Vice President, Regional Affairs

cc:

The Honorable Marion N. McLawhorn, Co-Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Education  
The Honorable Ray Rapp, Co-Chair Appropriations Subcommittee on Education  
The Honorable Beverly M. Earle, Co-Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services  
The Honorable Bob England, M.D., Co-Chair, Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services