



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION

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**Phil Boyer**  
President

February 7, 2008

Honorable John Huntsman  
Governor of Utah  
Utah State Capitol Complex  
350 North State Street, Suite 200  
PO Box 142220  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-2220

Dear Governor Huntsman:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of 415,000 pilots nationwide – including more than 3,500 in Utah – and I am writing to express our concern about a proposal to use funds from the State’s Aeronautics Restricted Account for the purchase of a new airplane.

With 41 public-use airports in the state, Utah makes significant investments in aviation. These airports are a vital part of the state’s transportation system, and play an important role in Utah’s economy. Utah’s airport system creates over 106,000 jobs, and is responsible for almost \$5.7 billion in economic activity. Tourism in Utah is heavily dependent on general aviation activity, and remote parts of the state rely on these airports for access to aerial firefighting, medivac services, search-and-rescue, agricultural spraying, and wildlife management. Additionally, Utah’s business community depends on general aviation on a daily basis, with many indicating that without access to general aviation, they would be forced to reduce employment or possibly relocate. Many of these businesses own or lease general aviation aircraft, and they and their customers use them to conduct business and visit their operations across the state.

By law the funds in the Aeronautics Restricted Account are expected to be dedicated primarily to “...the construction, improvement, operation, and maintenance of publicly used airports in this state”, and “the promotion of aeronautics”. These funds are enormously important to airport sponsors, most of which are local governments with limited resources for such capital expenditures. These state funds make it easier to meet the matching fund requirements for federal Airport Improvement Funds, which cover at least 90% of the cost for eligible airport projects. In Utah, 36 of the state’s 41 general aviation airports are eligible for these federal funds. Additionally, Utah provides some direct grants to airports not eligible for federal funds.

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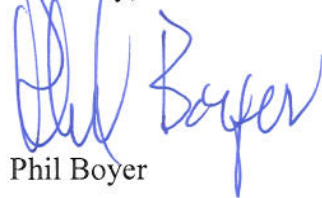
For these reasons, we are concerned about the proposal to use most of the \$2 million budgeted for use from the Aeronautics Restricted fund for the replacement of one of the state's aircraft. We are pleased that the state government has itself recognized the value of aviation by developing a small fleet of its own to meet the operational needs of its many agencies. At the same time, we suggest that such a replacement not come at the expense of continuing investment in the airport infrastructure that allows government aircraft to quickly respond to needs in every part of your vast state.

During a year when a record budget surplus is allowing the state to provide funds for so many other important initiatives, it makes sense to use the money in the aeronautics trust for the purpose for which it was intended – the improvement of airports and promotion of aviation.

Utah citizens get a lot of benefits from a relatively modest investment. And the funds for these investments come from the users of the airports – pilots and their aircraft. I encourage you to restore the funds in the Aeronautics Restricted Account to their highest and best use, and find other money from the state's surplus for the replacement of aircraft. In the end, both investments will be to the advantage of the people of your state.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We believe that with your continuing commitment, general aviation can play an ever-increasing role in Utah's prosperity. In the meantime, if you or your staff have any questions or would like to discuss this matter personally please do not hesitate to contact me or Mr. Gregory Pecoraro, our Vice President of Regional Affairs at 301-695-2106.

Sincerely,



Phil Boyer