

RAA Urges Swift Passage of Bipartisan, Bicameral Agreement on FAA Reauthorization

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The Regional Airline Association (RAA), which represents 16 U.S. airlines that collectively offer the only source of air service to more than two-thirds of the nation's airports, applauds the House and Senate Committee Leaders' Agreement on the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. RAA thanks Chair Sam Graves, Chair Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member Larsen, Ranking Member Cruz and every House and Senate Committee Member who worked toward the achievement of this bicameral, bipartisan legislation.

The agreement contains a bipartisan measure requiring the FAA to create an additional Enhanced Qualification Pathway (EQP), where air carriers may provide a structured training pathway toward a pilots' attainment of a Restricted-ATP certificate. RAA applauds Senators Thune (R-SD) and Sinema (I-AZ) for their relentless work and leadership on this issue and thanks Senator Duckworth (D-IL) for helping to build bipartisan consensus. RAA President and CEO Faye Malarkey Black noted: "this measure to improve training will also widen the accessibility of pilot career training – a major win for aviation safety and the traveling public."

RAA is grateful to the Committee for advancing additional RAA-backed workforce priorities, including expansion of the highly successful pilot and maintenance workforce grant program. RAA applauds Congress for rejecting a five percent local cost-share for EAS communities, protecting some of the most vulnerable small communities from potential collapse of the EAS program under the measure. Noting other potential changes to contract terms under the legislation, RAA will work to ensure the Department of Transportation protects carriers in the program from providing air service at a financial loss.

RAA is disappointed that language intended to raise the student loan cap for accredited flight education and training programs has not been included. Many aspiring pilots are barred from the career because they cannot afford or finance flight education. RAA will continue to work with Senators Baldwin (D-WI) and Sullivan (R-AK) and Representatives Allred (D-TX), Chavez DeRemer (R-OR), and Cohen (D-TN), who have led efforts to improve pilot career access through legislation ensuring pilot student loans align more closely with flight education costs.

A modest, two-year adjustment to the pilot mandatory retirement age was struck from the final agreement, which is a miss for the traveling public and a particularly devastating blow to pilots facing age discrimination through a retirement mandate that is neither fair nor evidence-based. RAA continues to support raising the pilot retirement age globally and domestically and thanks and recognizes the Let Experienced Pilots Fly

coalition and Representative Nehls (R-TX) and Senators Graham (R-SC), Blackburn (R-TN) and Manchin (D-WV) for their efforts toward this goal.

Most importantly, RAA applauds every House and Senate lawmaker who worked toward this agreement. Black concluded: “In an era of partisan divide, the Chairs and Ranking Members of aviation-focused Committees and Subcommittees are demonstrating that honest policy discourse, between chambers and across the aisle, can still win the day for the American people. The FAA reauthorization agreement materially improves aviation safety and takes steps to reconnect American communities. RAA urges swift passage in the House and Senate and looks forward to supporting implementation.”