

Senate Unveils FAA Authorization Bill, No ATC Privatization or User Fees

Aeromedical reform language passed by Senate in December also included

March 9, 2016 – The U.S. Senate today unveiled its version of an FAA reauthorization bill, a bipartisan measure that would fund the agency through September 2017. An initial review by EAA advocacy staff contained some good news: there was no mention of ATC privatization in the measure, which ran into immense opposition in the House version last month. Nor was there any mention of general aviation user fees, something that EAA, AOPA, and other GA organizations have continually opposed for the past two decades.

Also included in the legislation was the aeromedical reform language approved by the Senate in December, when it passed the Pilot's Bill of Rights 2. In addition, FAR Part 23 reform for aircraft certification is part of the measure.

"Many of the good things that appeared in the House version of FAA reauthorization legislation remain here, without the unacceptable language of ATC privatization," said EAA CEO/Chairman Jack J. Pelton, who was on Capitol Hill on Wednesday to speak directly to senators and their staff members. "The Senate had already indicated its limits on medical reform in December, but we're pleased that it is included here so it can move forward quickly. We are continuing our efforts in the Senate to ensure that those items essential for general aviation survive and grow in our country."

Media reports indicate that Senate Republicans were hoping for a three-year reauthorization bill, but Democrats would only support a shorter measure. Now as a bipartisan measure, there are hopes to move it forward quickly to give FAA its reauthorization without a series of continuing resolutions, which occurred prior to the last FAA reauthorization in 2012. Still, it's likely a short-term continuing resolution will be necessary to fund the agency as its current authorization expires on March 31.

The next step for the bill will be a review and markup session before the Senate Commerce Committee, currently scheduled for March 16.