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HAI Applauds Passage of AAIM Act and other Aviation Priorities in Funding Bill

Congress passes omnibus bill that includes several HAI-backed proposals.

Alexandria, Va. (Dec. 22, 2022) – Helicopter Association International (HAI) applauds the work of the US Senate in passing the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, an omnibus spending bill that includes a number of HAI-backed elements supporting vertical aviation. The bill, which provides \$1.7 trillion in discretionary resources, will now go to the US House of Representatives before being signed into law by President Biden.

“We are grateful that Congress incorporated several of HAI’s priorities in the funding package that just passed in the Senate,” says James Viola, president and CEO of HAI. “We encourage the House and President Biden to provide their approval as quickly as possible.”

The funding package includes the HAI-endorsed Advanced Aviation Infrastructure Modernization (AAIM) Act, which establishes a \$25 million two-year pilot program that will provide planning grants for advanced air mobility (AAM) infrastructure to state, local, and tribal governments, transit agencies, port authorities, and metropolitan planning organizations. These plans will include details on infrastructure topics such as potential vertiport locations, physical and digital infrastructure requirements to support AAM operations, connectivity to existing transit systems, and strategies to connect underserved communities.

“The AAIM Act outlines a comprehensive set of considerations for infrastructure planning that will enable communities to maximize the societal benefits that AAM will offer,” says Viola. “States and local governments across the country realize that AAM has the potential to create 300,000 jobs by 2035, and they are eager to make the investments necessary to support new vertical flight technology.”

The AAIM Act passed the House on June 13, 2022, and the Senate version was approved by the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee on May 25, 2022.

“So much progress was made on AAM development this year that it is really important for Congress to get this over the finish line,” Viola adds. “We commend House Aviation Subcommittee Chairman Rick Larsen (D-Wash.-2), Ranking Member Garret Graves (R-La.-6), and Rep. Dina Titus (D-Nev.-1) as well as Sens. Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) and Jerry Moran (R-Kans.) for their leadership in sponsoring the AAIM Act and advancing it through the legislative process.”

In addition to the AAIM Act, HAI’s Government Affairs team worked on several aviation-related issues that are addressed in the omnibus bill, including the following provisions:

- Ensures AAM Remains on Schedule – Recognizes the FAA’s ongoing work on AAM and its commitment to complete the proposed Special Federal Aviation Regulation by Dec. 31, 2024.
- Blocks ATC Privatization – Opposes any efforts to transfer the FAA’s air traffic functions to a not-for-profit, independent, private corporation.
- Supports Aviation Workforce Development – Provides \$10 million for the development of the aviation maintenance workforce and \$5 million for the pilot workforce.
- Prioritizes Alternative Fuels for General Aviation – Directs the FAA to prioritize funding for testing and identifying unleaded fuels that can be safely used in piston-engine aircraft.
- Funds Helicopter Safety Efforts – Provides \$5 million for efforts to improve helicopter safety and directs the FAA to brief Congress on an execution strategy.
- Monitors 5G Interference – Directs the FAA to immediately notify Congress of any anticipated disruptions to the National Airspace System due to further implementation of 5G wireless systems and to work with other federal agencies and industry stakeholders to mitigate related disruptions.

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HAI is the professional trade association for the international helicopter industry and represents more than 1,100 companies and over 16,000 industry professionals in more than 65 countries. Each year, HAI members safely operate more than 3,700 helicopters and remotely piloted aircraft approximately 2.9 million hours. HAI is dedicated to the promotion of the helicopter as a safe, effective method of commerce and to the advancement of the international helicopter community.