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Federal Update

US Senate Passes FAA Reauthorization Bill

Summary of Facts

On May 9, the Senate approved H.R.3935, which would reauthorize the FAA for another five years, with a decisive 88–4 vote. The measure allocates more than \$105 billion for the agency through fiscal 2028.

The approval came after extensive negotiations during which nonaviation-related amendments were excluded. The bill addresses crucial aviation issues, including workforce development, pilot training, flight disruptions, and the advancement of innovative technologies such as advanced air mobility and uncrewed aircraft systems.

In addition, the House approved and the Senate passed a one-week extension (H.R.8289) before recessing for the week, to ensure uninterrupted air operations until the legislation's final approval. This is Congress's fourth short-term FAA extension since September 2023 because of disagreements over the bill's language.

The House is expected to review the comprehensive FAA bill Tuesday, May 14.

VAI Position and Actions

VAI applauds congressional leaders for moving forward with a bipartisan FAA reauthorization bill. The bill provides significant improvements for general aviation and the vertical aviation industry specifically. This legislation supports several priorities that VAI has endorsed, including aviation safety, workforce development, and advanced air mobility. VAI looks forward to the House passing the bill before the current authorization expires on May 17.

Upon the bill's full passage, VAI will publish a summary of the bill highlighting the significant provisions impacting the vertical flight industry. VAI members should be on the lookout for this summary, which will be available on [our advocacy website](#).

State and Local Update

Hawaii Bill Proposing Inaccessible Operator Insurance Rates Dies in Conference

Summary of Facts

Hawaii State [Senate Bill 2747](#) (S.B.2747), which threatened to impose inaccessible insurance rates on air tour operators in Hawaii, died in legislative conference earlier this month.

The bill, which initially had passed both the Hawaii Senate and House, required air tour operators to maintain aircraft liability insurance coverage of \$20 million per person per incident (as amended). State Sen. Chris Lee (D-District 25) had introduced the bill in January with a liability coverage requirement of at least \$1 million per person per incident. The Senate Committee on Transportation and Culture and the Arts, however, removed the \$1 million threshold and advanced the bill to the House Committee on Consumer Protection & Commerce (CPC) to review the language and assign a more accurate rate, given the committee's expertise in addressing insurance limits.

The House CPC amended the bill in early April, increasing the liability insurance requirement for air tour operators to \$20 million per person per incident.

VAI Position and Actions

VAI took proactive steps to oppose S.B.2747, collaborating with industry peers including the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, the National Business Aviation Association, and the National Air Transportation Association. In addition, VAI engaged in productive dialogue with Hawaii state legislators to address the vertical aviation industry's concerns about the bill, emphasizing the potential financial burden and regulatory conflicts the bill posed. Primary industry concerns included the impracticality of obtaining the specified insurance coverage at a reasonable cost and the risk of violating FAA grant assurances, potentially jeopardizing Hawaii's federal funding for airport improvement programs.

VAI appreciates the constructive dialogue with Hawaii state legislators and their receptiveness to our members' input.

International Issues

New Brazilian Vertical Flight Association Announced at Heli XP

Summary of Facts

The Instituto Brasileiro de Asas Rotativas (IBAR) was officially established last week during Heli XP in São Paulo, Brazil. Diego Medeiros, CEO of Helipark and primary organizer of Heli XP, announced the news during the two-day event May 8–9.

IBAR's mission is to promote sustainable and safe development in vertical air mobility, fostering dialogue between various stakeholders and advocating for technological innovation, public policy development, strategic partnerships, improved accessibility and connectivity, and environmental sustainability in Brazil's aviation sector.

Celebrating its fifth edition this year, Heli XP is Latin America's premier rotary-wing event. The summit fosters positive interactions and bolsters relationships within Brazil's rotorcraft market, which boasts the world's second-largest rotorcraft fleet and among the most helicopter trips per day. Heli XP attendees enjoy an immersive rotorcraft experience, with leading brands showcasing products and services, aircraft displays, and demonstration flights.

VAI Position and Actions

VAI applauds the formation of IBAR and the association's mission to promote sustainable and safe development in vertical air mobility. IBAR's dedication to fostering collaboration, innovation, and environmental sustainability aligns with our values at VAI.

As IBAR embarks on this important journey, we stand behind the organization, knowing that its efforts will contribute to the advancement of Brazil's aviation industry. Together, we can drive positive change and create a brighter future for vertical flight in Brazil and beyond.

VAI supports IBAR and looks forward to working closely with the organization to achieve our shared goals of promoting accessibility, safety, and technological innovation in the vertical aviation industry.

News from VAI's Regional Representatives

By Josh Rousseau, VAI Northeastern US Regional Representative

Last month, on behalf of VAI members and industry partners, I had the privilege of testifying at the New York City Council's Committee on Economic Development helicopter sound and safety public hearing. I voiced VAI's strong opposition to legislation banning nonessential helicopter operations in the city as well as to state legislation imposing a "noise tax." I also highlighted our commitment to community compatibility and the great work we're doing through the New York/New Jersey Helicopter Symposium.

Right after the hearing, I traveled to New Hampshire to meet with Kurt West, president of JBI Helicopter Services and a VAI member, who generously provided a tour of his first-class facilities in Pembroke. Kurt and his team highlighted their passion for safety and showed why their client services are on another level.

While in the Granite State, I also had a great meet-and-greet with lead pilot Paul Austin of VAI member Metro Aviation at the main base of the Dartmouth Hitchcock Advanced Response Team (DHART) at the Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center in Lebanon, New Hampshire. DHART provides vital care to critically ill and injured patients in the northern New England region of New Hampshire, Vermont, and western Maine, as well as in Upstate New York.

As we roll into spring in the Northern Hemisphere, I'm keeping a close eye on legislation in multiple states that is detrimental to our industry while continuing to highlight our priorities and support the efforts of state and local stakeholders who recognize the value our members provide daily.

VAI is the leading global voice in promoting the safety, community compatibility, professionalism, innovation, and economic viability of our industry, and I am actively advocating for our vision for both the present and the future.

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