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US NEWS

Congressional Update

Senate Confirms Michael Witaker as New FAA Administrator

[*Summary of Facts*](#)

Michael Whitaker was unanimously approved Oct. 24 to lead the FAA, with a 98–0 bipartisan vote by the US Senate. During his confirmation hearing, Whitaker emphasized his commitment to addressing shortages of personnel—including air traffic controllers, pilots, and maintenance technicians—that pose a significant challenge to aviation operations and growth. His Senate confirmation process proceeded smoothly without any controversy.

HAI Position and Actions

Whitaker, boasting over 30 years of experience in aviation policy, received broad support from various sectors within the aviation community, including HAI. Given the rapid evolution of vertical aviation and the emergence of new players in the field, Whitaker’s extensive experience in advanced air mobility (AAM) and knowledge of the industry will provide him with exceptional insight to lead the FAA during a time of tremendous innovation.

US House of Representatives Selects New Speaker

Summary of Facts

On Oct. 25, Congressman Mike Johnson (R-La.-04), representing Louisiana’s northwest and western regions, was elected speaker of the US House of Representatives. The three-week absence of a speaker had halted proceedings in the lower chamber and posed a risk of a government shutdown. Johnson publicly stated his intentions to start work promptly on securing government funding before the Nov. 17 deadline.

In November, one of Speaker Johnson’s top priorities will be to initiate negotiations on the FAA reauthorization immediately following its passage in the Senate.

Read More

- [Mike Johnson’s list of proposed priorities for the House of Representatives.](#)

State and Local Updates

Florida Introduces Legislation Addressing Aircraft Taxes

Summary of Facts

Last week, Florida introduced three bills, HB 269, SB 230, and SB 264, addressing aircraft taxes. If passed, the bills would establish the maximum allowable tax for every aircraft sale or use in the state. Additionally, they would expand the tax exemption for aircraft sales and leases.

If these bills become law, the maximum tax per aircraft sale or use in Florida will be capped at \$18,000. Furthermore, the sale or lease of a qualified aircraft or an aircraft with a maximum certified takeoff weight of less than 12,500 lb. or more than 15,000 lb. for common carrier use will be exempt from the tax. These legislative changes would take effect Jul. 1, 2024.

HAI Position and Actions

HAI endorses legislation that alleviates tax burdens, fosters financial advantages, and bolsters competitiveness in the aviation industry. These bills facilitate cost savings by imposing a cap on the maximum tax for aircraft, including helicopters. Moreover, they extend tax exemptions to encompass helicopters and similar aircraft. This broader exemption would serve as a financial

incentive for helicopter operators and manufacturers, rendering Florida a more appealing hub for their business operations.

Read More

- [HB 269 \(flsenate.gov\)](#)
- [SB 230 \(flsenate.gov\)](#)
- [SB 264 \(flsenate.gov\)](#)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Europe

Biofuels Industry Raises Concerns about EU's Decarbonization Policies

Summary of Facts

The biofuels industry is raising concerns about the European Union's approach to decarbonization, particularly within the aviation sector, reports pan-European news website Euractiv.

Under the ReFuelEU Aviation and FuelEU Maritime regulations, advanced biofuels, derived from residue, waste materials, and hydrogen-based synthetic sources, are regarded as environmentally friendly fuels. While the EU has introduced new regulations to advance sustainability by prohibiting the use of crop-based biofuels in maritime and aviation industries, these very same biofuels are playing a pivotal role in mitigating carbon emissions in the road transport sector. To justify the exclusion of the fuels from maritime and aviation use, the EU regulations cite sustainability concerns and the current limited demand for crop-based biofuels in the maritime and aviation sectors.

This incongruity in the treatment of biofuels across different EU legislation has sparked questions from the biofuels industry, which perceives discrimination in certain cases that hinders the full potential of biofuels to contribute to the EU's broader decarbonization objectives.

Read More

- [Euractiv article: "Biofuels industry criticises 'inconsistent' transport decarbonisation policy."](#)

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