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Issue Overview, Apr. 21, 2023

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House Aviation Subcommittee Reviews FAA 1,500 Hours of Training Rule

This week, the House Subcommittee on Aviation held a hearing to examine current and future challenges facing the aviation workforce. During the hearing, the conversation surrounding the rule requiring 1,500 hours of total flight time for commercial pilots was raised.

The FAA's 1,500-hour rule specifies that for a pilot to be eligible to fly for a regional or major airline, the pilot must have at least 1,500 hours of flight time. Before the introduction of this rule, first officers were required to be commercial license holders with a minimum of 250 hours of flight time.

Prior to the hearing, two former FAA administrators wrote a letter to members of the House Transportation & Infrastructure (T&I) Committee and the Aviation Subcommittee asking them to consider new regulations for pilot training and qualification as well as a new pilot training model. Both administrators said 1,500 hours of *nontraining* flight time would barely improve the skills, knowledge, and experience demanded of pilots operating in a busy aviation environment.

Although House T&I Committee Chairman Sam Graves (R-Mo.-06) appears interested in making some modifications to the rule, Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), chair of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Aviation Safety, Operations, and Innovation, says she doesn't intend to make any changes to it.

Peters Introduces Promoting Women in Aviation Act

Sen. Gary Peters (D-Mich.) on Mar. 30 introduced S.1154, the bipartisan Promoting Women in Aviation Act. If enacted, the legislation would establish within the Department of Transportation the Women in Aviation Advisory Committee.

The committee would be composed of up to 15 members appointed by the US secretary of transportation from major airlines and aerospace companies, nonprofit aviation organizations, airport operators and employees, aviation and engineering business associations, the US Civil Air Patrol, and aviation trade schools. The committee would advise the FAA on matters related to women in the aviation industry and provide valuable insight on best efforts to recruit more women to, and promote and retain them within, the industry.

Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.), chair of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Aviation Safety, Operations, and Innovation, is a co-sponsor of S.1154. She recently said women continue to be underrepresented in the aviation industry, where they currently make up less than 12% of aerospace engineers, less than 10% of licensed pilots, and less than 3% of maintenance technicians.

HAI supports collaboration between the aviation industry and Congress to encourage more women to pursue careers in aviation. This bill would help strengthen the aviation workforce at-large as well as address challenges related to pilot shortages. Representation of women in the aviation workforce is necessary for our nation's economic competitiveness, success, safety, and leadership.

Johnson Introduces Minorities in Aviation Education Act of 2023

On Mar. 30, Rep. Hank Johnson Jr. (D-Ga.-04) introduced H.R.2428, the Minorities in Aviation Education Act of 2023, directing the secretary of transportation to “establish a grant program to improve the preparation and representation of certain students in aviation-related fields” Essentially, the bill would require the secretary to create the Bessie Coleman Aviation Education Program (in honor of the first Black woman and first Native American to hold a pilot license) to provide grants to improve the preparation and representation of students, particularly women and minorities, in aviation-related fields.

Grants would be directed toward activities that increase exposure and access to aviation-related education and jobs through:

- Internships, apprenticeships, or scholarships that offer students experience in the aviation industry
- Programs that introduce students to uncrewed aircraft systems
- Career exploration and educational programs that teach technical skills used in aviation maintenance
- Initiatives to increase the recruitment and retention of underrepresented minorities in postsecondary aviation degree programs.

Under the legislation, the secretary would be required to give priority to applicants who plan to use the grant funds to encourage participation in the aviation industry among women, minorities, and individuals in rural and urban areas. The maximum amount of a grant awarded in a fiscal year would be \$500,000. HAI encourages and promotes bills such as H.R.2428 that increase exposure and access to aviation-related education and jobs.

H.R.2664 Introduced to Coordinate Agency Efforts in Transportation

This week, Rep. Suzan DelBene (D-Wash.-01) introduced HR.2664. If enacted, the bill would provide for coordination between federal agencies regarding the decarbonization, development, certification, and deployment of aircraft, vessels, and medium- and heavy-duty transportation vehicles.

According to media outlet Politico, H.R.2664, the text of which has not yet been made available publicly, would expand cross-agency collaboration between the Department of Transportation and the Department of Energy with the aim of reducing aircraft emissions. The legislation would expand federal research and technical assistance in low- and no-carbon technologies for all modes of transportation along with the requisite charging infrastructure. It would also expand research into alternative fuels, including sustainable aviation fuel, biofuels, hydrogen, methanol, and ammonia.

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