

# THE VTOL ADVOCATE

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### New York Governor Vetoes 'Stop the Chop' Bill

Gov. Kathy Hochul has vetoed New York Senate Bill 7493A, known as the "Stop the Chop" bill. The legislation would have allowed anyone to sue an operator, pilot, flight department, line-service personnel, or company employee operating in the state for alleged helicopter noise pollution, even if the flight in question was conducted in accordance with federal law and regulations.

"We are grateful for the governor's sound reasoning in vetoing this legislation," says James Viola, president and CEO of HAI. "The bill would have resulted in frivolous lawsuits, and it had the potential to affect future vertical aviation flight operations as well."

In a statement announcing her decision, Hochul cited preemption as her primary reason for the veto. "Recent federal case law makes clear that nonfederal actors must carefully consider how state and local restrictions interact with federal laws governing aviation and must be attentive to federally mandated processes for enacting policy in this area," she said. "Certain elements of this legislation run counter to the federal scheme regulating New York's airports and airspace. Therefore, I am constrained to veto this bill."

To view [HAI's press release](#) applauding the governor's decision, visit [rotormedia.com](#).

## Deadline for FAA Administrator Nomination

When Congress convenes in January, the Senate Commerce Committee is planning to hold a hearing regarding the consideration of Phil Washington, CEO of Denver International Airport (KDEN), as head of the FAA. The position has been vacant since Steve Dickson retired earlier this year.

The Senate's intention was to have a final vote on the matter by the end of December, but because the chamber is currently working on passing the omnibus spending bill, Washington's nomination will have to wait until next year. In the meantime, the FAA's top aviation safety official, Billy Nolen, will continue as the agency's acting administrator.

Senate Commerce Committee Chair Maria Cantwell (D-WA), who heads the panel that oversees the FAA, says there hasn't been enough time to get President Biden's nominee to the floor. Cantwell believes the White House will renominate Washington next year, however.

Since his nomination in July, Washington has come under a lot of criticism. Many senators believe he lacks the necessary aviation experience to lead the FAA. Because Washington's background is mostly in urban transit, some members of the Commerce Committee don't want his nomination to be approved.

## Aviation Workforce Development Act Introduced in Senate

The Aviation Workforce Development Act (S.5208) was introduced to the Senate by Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) on Dec. 7. The intention of this bill is to help address the shortage of pilots and mechanics across the nation. The legislation would enhance the FAA's current aviation workforce development grant program by increasing annual funding for pilot and mechanic development grants from \$5 million to \$7 million for each fiscal year from 2024 through 2028. If the bill is enacted, the FAA administrator will need to establish a national strategic plan to address projected shortages of workers in the aviation industry.

Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS) says investing in the development of our industry's workforce will help attract and retain talent and help our nation meet the transportation needs of tomorrow. According to the Aviation Technician Education Council (ATEC), the number of newly certified mechanics is still 20% below what the industry needs. The pandemic has cost the aviation industry 5,000 new mechanics, and meeting demand in the next few years will be a challenge. We must recognize the negative impact this severe shortage of skilled workers has on the entire aviation industry.

HAI applauds and supports legislation that will help expand our pipeline of future mechanics, pilots, and manufacturers. We look forward to working with Congress to help establish long-term solutions.

## Rick Larsen Secures a Powerful Endorsement

In 2019, Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR-04) was elected chair of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, a position that oversees aviation, highways and transit, ports and water resources, railroads, economic development, and the US Coast Guard. As chair, and previously as ranking member, DeFazio took the lead on multiple laws that have created jobs, improved transportation, kept our ports open, and kept the airline industry accountable. Yet, after 36 years of service in the House of Representatives, DeFazio is officially retiring. As he steps down, Democratic Congress members of the T&I Committee look to fill his role.

Last month, Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA-02) wrote to members of Congress to seek their support, stating his intention to lead the Democrats as ranking member on the T&I Committee in the 118th Congress. As a result, the House Democratic Steering and Policy Committee recently voted to endorse Larsen over Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC). Although this might be a small win for Larsen, he still needs to get full approval from the House Democratic Caucus.

Larsen has helped pass multiple authorizations of critical transportation programs and looks at the 118th Congress as an opportunity to further the implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law—a long-overdue piece of legislation that will improve our outdated infrastructure with one that looks ahead to 2050 to help begin our nation's transition to a cleaner, greener economy. In his letter, Larsen also stated his intentions to advance the national conversation around equity in transportation.

As the committee faces a shift in priorities with Republicans taking control of the House and Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO-06) becoming its chair, endorsing Larsen or Norton won't be an easy choice. Norton has stressed her status as the panel's most senior member after DeFazio.

HAI looks forward to working closely with all members of the T&I Committee.

## House Passes Stopgap Bill to Avert Government Shutdown

This past Wednesday, the House passed a stopgap spending bill that gives lawmakers more time to pass a \$1.7 trillion year-end spending package to keep federal agencies operating through fiscal year 2023. The Senate will now have to move quickly to also pass the stopgap funding bill. This funding would temporarily avert a government shutdown and extend the federal budget until Dec. 23.

The House vote on the bill comes after appropriators established a deal Tuesday night on a bipartisan framework to pave the way for a year-end funding bill that would boost federal agency budgets for the current fiscal year. Senate Republicans held a special conference this week in which they focused on how best to tackle a looming fight over the debt ceiling.

Members of the House Appropriations Committee seem confident that House Democrats can pass the massive spending package once it comes together; the package covers critical issues such as military readiness, Ukraine aid, and health care. Congressional negotiators announced earlier this week a framework for the omnibus package but didn't release details on the funding, keeping the specifics concealed to avoid sparking any opposition. But negotiators have settled on about \$858 billion for a defense budget.

While top Senate Republicans signed on to that deal, House Republicans have rejected it. They want negotiations delayed until after they assume the House majority on Jan. 3, which would give them more leverage to cut domestic spending. The biggest hang-up between both parties has been reaching an agreement on funding levels for domestic programs. Democrats have fought for social spending increases designed to keep pace with inflation, arguing that nondefense funding is just as important.

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