



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 12, 2024

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PRESS RELEASE

VAI Announces Leadership Change in 2025

Vertical Aviation International to open search process for Viola's replacement.

Alexandria, VA (December 12, 2024) – The Board of Directors of Vertical Aviation International (VAI) announced today a change in the association's leadership that will take place in early 2025.

James Viola, VAI president and CEO, will leave the organization in March 2025 to assume a similar position at the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA). Pete Bunce, current GAMA president and CEO, will retire in April 2025, after 20 years of leading that association. Viola will assume his new role on March 16, the week after VERTICON 2025, VAI's conference and trade show, takes place in Dallas, Texas.

Viola became president and CEO of Helicopter Association International on Jan. 16, 2020, and oversaw implementation of the association's rebranding to Vertical Aviation International, which was announced in February 2024. He also worked with the VAI Board of Directors to enact the association's strategic initiatives. Other highlights of Viola's tenure saw the expansion of the VAI government affairs and regulatory staff, as well as a focus on expanding benefits for and delivering value to the VAI membership, which includes vertical aviation manufacturers and suppliers, operators, pilots, maintenance technicians, and other industry professionals.

"Throughout my career, I have always looked for the place where I can make the most impact. With all the dynamic changes occurring in aviation, I believe that place is now GAMA," says Viola. "However, I will be working for some of the same member companies and on some of the same priorities as I did at VAI. Rest assured, I will never stop advocating for the vertical aviation industry—and promoting the value it brings to our communities."

"James's contributions to VAI and its members are well understood," says Mark Schlaefli, of Dakota Rotors and chair of the VAI Board of Directors. "His deep experience in leadership, safety efforts, and the regulatory environment contributed to VAI's record of delivering solid results for our members. We already have a close, collaborative relationship with GAMA, and with James at the helm, we expect that relationship to become even more effective."

The VAI Board of Directors has initiated a search process for the VAI president and CEO position and will share more information at a later date.

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Vertical Aviation International (VAI), formerly Helicopter Association International (HAI), is the world's leading membership association dedicated to the vertical aviation industry, which encompasses all aircraft capable of vertical or short takeoff and landing. Throughout its 76 years of fueling industry growth through connection, advocacy, safety, education, and support

Vertical Aviation International

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for its members' success, VAI has leveraged the power of vertical flight to strengthen communities worldwide. The association welcomes all facets of the vertical aviation industry, including manufacturers, operators, suppliers and vendors, pilots and maintenance technicians, and other aviation professionals. For more information about VAI, please visit:

<https://verticalavi.org/>

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