



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 13, 2025

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PRESS RELEASE

Vertical Aviation International Board Elections Enhance Industry Representation

New governance structure recognizes diversity of industry.

Dallas, Texas, USA (Mar. 13, 2025) – Vertical Aviation International (VAI), the leading trade association for the vertical aviation industry, is pleased to announce the results of the first election of board members under its restructured governance framework. VAI operator members elected five of their peers to serve a three-year term on the Board of Directors.

This expansion aligns with VAI’s commitment to better represent a diverse and growing industry while ensuring the association remains future-focused and adaptive to member needs. The election results were announced during the association’s annual conference and trade show, VERTICON.

“As the vertical aviation industry continues to evolve, it is critical that our governance structure reflects the needs of our members,” says Mark Schlaefli, VAI board chair and owner of Dakota Rotors, a Part 135/133 operator in the US Upper Midwest and Mountain West. “Our new board structure strengthens our ability to represent operators of all sizes and mission types, ensuring that every voice within the industry is heard.”

The revised board structure includes representation from small, medium, and large operators, as well as government and public-service representatives. This change ensures a balanced, inclusive approach to association leadership and decision-making.

The following individuals were elected for a three-year term, beginning Jul. 1, 2025, joining the six current board members:

Small Commercial/Private Vertical Aircraft Operator

- **Jan Becker**, Swashplate, Yandina Creek, Queensland, Australia
- **Chris Baur**, Hughes Aerospace Corporation, The Woodlands, Texas, USA

Medium Commercial/Private Vertical Aircraft Operator

- **David McColl**, LiveWire Aviation, Homosassa, Florida, USA
- **Brandi Rector**, Semper Fly Helicopters, Norman, Oklahoma, USA

Government Service Commercial/Private Vertical Aircraft Operator

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- **Stephen Lee**, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Kennedy Space Center, Florida, USA

“Our new board members strengthen our ability to lead, ensuring that VAI is well-positioned to advocate for and support the entire vertical aviation community,” says Schlaefli. “I want to thank them for stepping forward as volunteers who will work on behalf of the entire membership to promote and protect our industry.”

The restructuring follows a comprehensive bylaw revision process undertaken by the VAI Board of Directors to align the association’s governance with its vision, mission, and strategic goals. With these updates, VAI is poised to lead the industry through continued growth, technological advancements, and regulatory changes.

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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 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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