

INDUSTRY TARGETS FAA BILL, SECURITY RULES IN GOALS FOR 2009 – Quick passage of an FAA reauthorization bill and changes on a sweeping security proposal remain among the most pressing priorities as business and general aviation groups start the new year.

National Air Transportation Association President James Coyne hopes that all elements of aviation can come together in a constructive way to help enact an FAA bill. GA and airline groups have been at odds over the FAA funding portion of authorization, with airline groups pushing for business aviation to assume up to \$2 billion more in costs of the air traffic control system through user fees and higher taxes.

"The good news is to a degree, the airlines seem to have gotten their worst days behind them now that fuel prices are down and they have balanced capacity with demand," Coyne said. "So maybe now that airlines are in the mode of making money, they will be less desperate to shift tax burdens."

It would be short-sighted and ill-conceived if the Air Transport Association would again push for user fees, said Pete Bunce, president and CEO of the General Aviation Manufacturers Association. "Airlines are the only trade association that doesn't want a bill passed. [The industry] has resolved most of the issues, and airlines are the only ones that don't want a new deal."

"ATA is entitled to its point of view," added new Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association President Craig Fuller, "but AOPA and others in the aviation community would like to see the reauthorization bill pick up where it left off and advance it as soon as possible. Our members are so solidly opposed to user fees, so if it comes up again, we will fight and hope it doesn't hold up a speedy effort on reauthorization."

There has been a very thorough debate about FAA funding over the past two years, said Ed Bolen, president and CEO of the National Business Aviation Association. "The debate was resolved with the passage of the House bill," he said. "The Senate took that bill to the floor, but it didn't pass. We would hope that since this bill has already been thoroughly debated, that would enable us to move on a bill promptly that builds on a proven and established system of taxes."

The GA groups also plan to make a strong push to shelve some of the more controversial provisions in the Transportation Security Administration's proposed Large Aircraft Security Program. The organizations have been in full mobilization mode, writing comments and urging members to attend five hearings scheduled in January across the country (*BA, Dec. 22/285*).

"The rule is flawed because it imposes another layer of security rules on general aviation without giving us any benefits," said NATA's Coyne. "The core basis of regulations about a risk of a weapon of mass destruction being delivered by a general aviation aircraft is grossly inflated. I've said that to outgoing Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and I hope we can say that to incoming Secretary Janet Napolitano."

GAMA is working with its sister associations on the issue, Bunce said. "But I'd like to see us get together and decide what parts we can live with," he said. "The big challenge with TSA is that most people we've dealt with are either moving to new jobs or leaving the agency. I'm concerned that the process may grind along as [TSA chief Kip] Hawley and Chertoff move on and new players come in."

Fuller expressed concern about the underlying justification for the proposal. "Without known threats, we're delving into the realm of regulation by imagination, as was told to me by someone," he said. "We're going down that road of the possibility of imposing large and unnecessary costs. We want to do our part for security of our industry, but we also need to deal with the cost to do this."

NBAA plans to file extensive comments and participate in the public hearings, Bolen said. "We are looking for security regulations that are appropriately tailored to reflect the way business aviation works that are prudent, reasonable and workable."

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PASSUR ADDS PENTASTAR TO FBO, FUEL PORTAL CLIENT BASE – Pentastar Aviation has become the latest fixed-base operation to sign up for Passur Aerospace's FBO and Fuel Portal tools. Pentastar plans to use the software at its Waterford, Mich. and Van Nuys, Calif. fixed-base operations. FBO provides real-time flight, customer, and airspace status for customer service, line operations, and marketing through visual flight tracking, while Fuel Portal allows users to competitively price fuel in the corporate market.

Passur's FBO uses a radar network that feeds into a master database that provides FBOs real-time information. This allows the FBO to have catering, fuel trucks and ground transportation ready when a flight arrives. The software also allows companies to track regular customers.

Fuel Portal estimates fuel requirements for aircraft by type and distance. An aircraft comes in and buys 500 gallons of fuel, said Ron Dunskey, vice president of marketing and new product development, "but you know he needs 1,000. He is doing this to get to another airport with a better deal and buy bulk fuel there. You can figure that out." The software allows FBOs to run "refined reports" with information including who comes to an airfield and where they fueled, Dunskey said.