



AIRCRAFT OWNERS AND PILOTS ASSOCIATION  
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**Phil Boyer**

President

June 8, 2004

Governor George Pataki  
State of New York  
State Capitol  
Albany, New York 12224

Dear Governor Pataki:

On behalf of the 400,000 members of the Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association - including some 15,000 New York residents - I want to express our deep concern about any security initiatives being considered for New York's 145 public-use airports. AOPA members are pilots and aircraft owners involved in personal aviation that is referred in the aviation community as general aviation. Our concern is that the state's action could diffuse federal efforts and be counterproductive to enhancing security, while at the same time damaging - perhaps permanently - the state's economy.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the agency responsible for all aviation security, recently stressed that it does not consider general aviation aircraft and airports to be a threat, in and of themselves. The Agency has also emphasized that "one size fits all" solutions - be they imposed by the federal or state government - will not improve aviation security.

Our members recognize the responsibilities the nation's pilots must assume to help keep the U.S. safe and secure. According to the TSA, "The vigilance of airport users is one of the most prevalent methods of enhancing security at GA airports.

Typically, the user population is familiar with those individuals who have a valid purpose for being on the airport property."

That is precisely why AOPA has taken the leading role in protecting the nation's general aviation infrastructure by investing over \$700,000 in an "Airport Watch" program. This program is designed after the concepts of neighborhood watch efforts and features training brochures, warning stickers, decals, posters, and signs. An educational training tape introduced by Department of Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge is an important part of the effort to explain to pilots and others in the aviation community what to watch for and how to report suspicious activity based on real-life scenarios. The TSA has established a nationwide toll-free number, 1-866-GA-SECURE, staffed to receive calls 24 hours a day, 365 days a year about suspicious activities.

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Federal efforts don't stop here. The U.S. Congress, the TSA, and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have taken numerous actions since the events of 9/11 to enhance general aviation security. These include strict regulation and screening of all pilots, both U.S. and non-U.S. citizens, requirements to carry picture identification, new pilot certificates, flight school security, and charter flight security programs. Last month the TSA released its Information Bulletin, *Security Guidelines for General Aviation Airports*.

General aviation airports are the "off ramps" that link thousands of communities into an interstate transportation network. As you know, most of these 145 airports across New York are operated by local governments, which are also struggling to fund needed public services. In this regard, the proposed security measures could pose a combination one-two punch to dozens of New York communities already reeling from the lingering recession and government fiscal crisis.

These airports were lauded by the state as "the economic engines of the communities they serve!" (*The Benefits of Aviation in New York*, NYSDOT, Nov. 2003). Your DOT report cites that Empire State airports generate \$35.4 billion in annual economic activity and provide jobs for 347,500 New Yorkers.

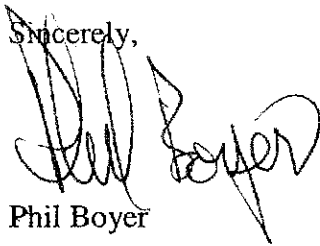
Requiring local airports to impose and enforce new security rules, they represent a costly unfunded mandate for each city, town, or county that operates its local airport. This could stunt that economic growth and jeopardize those jobs without providing any real security enhancements at the state's airports.

As many communities have experienced, the commercial airlines have cut service or even abandoned many of these same local airports, particularly upstate. General aviation flights represent the primary, and certainly most convenient, link to the world for businesses and workers in those communities; making the local airport less accessible, less efficient, and more costly will only further strangle these towns' fragile economic base.

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Under your leadership, New York has taken positive steps toward becoming more aviation friendly, and we - and our 15,000 New York members - want to continue to work together to revitalize the state's economy. We urge the state to consult with aviation stakeholders - those of us who have the most invested and who are the most concerned with maintaining proper airport security - prior to advancing state-specific measures. AOPA wants to work cooperatively with you, the legislature, and other state and local officials to ensure that New York's general aviation airports are the safest, most secure, and productive in the nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phil Boyer". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script. The first name "Phil" is written with a large, sweeping initial "P". The last name "Boyer" is written in a similar cursive style. The signature is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Phil Boyer