

Duckworth, Inhofe introduce bipartisan FLIGHT Act to help small, rural airports

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senator James Inhofe (R-OK) in introducing the *Forward Looking Investment in General Aviation, Hangars, and Tarmacs* (FLIGHT) Act, which would make it easier for more than 65 small and rural airports in Illinois to undertake important infrastructure improvements. Specifically, their bipartisan legislation would give these airports greater access to funding from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and provide needed flexibility to partner with private businesses to improve their facilities and create jobs.

“As a general aviation pilot, I know how important small and rural airports are to communities across the state of Illinois,” said Duckworth. “That’s why I’m proud to help introduce this bipartisan legislation with Sen. Inhofe to ensure these airports have the resources they need to support local job growth and economic development.”

“As a pilot myself, I know first-hand the needs of the GA community, and the FLIGHT Act makes a number of needed reforms to facilitate GA airport infrastructure investment,” said Inhofe. “The FLIGHT Act allows GA airports more FAA funding flexibility, expedites the environmental review process and incentivizes public-private partnerships. This legislation builds upon past Congressional efforts to support GA airports and will ultimately grow the positive impact GA airports have on the larger airport ecosystem.”

The FLIGHT Act would improve the ability of General Aviation airports across Illinois to access federal dollars through the Non-Primary Entitlement Program. It would also

allow small and rural airports to qualify for the same expedited and coordinated project review process that large airports currently enjoy and helps “Disaster Relief Airports” access funding for emergency planning activities and equipment. The Senator’s bipartisan legislation would also create a new pilot program for Public Private Partnerships to attract private investment for the construction of private hangars, business hangars or other facilities that would aid general aviation airports in devoting needed resources to improving their infrastructure.

“The *FLIGHT Act* addresses the growing needs of our nation’s system of airports by providing the FAA with long overdue flexibility it needs to fund important projects,” said Mark Baker, President and CEO of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. “Maintaining and upgrading runways, taxiways, and aprons and meeting the need for new hangars, helps keep airports and communities vibrant and competitive. This bill also takes a critically important step in recognizing the vital role that reliever airports play in natural disaster relief efforts. We’d like to thank Sens. Inhofe and Duckworth for their leadership and hard work to help airports prepare for the future in thousands of communities across the country.”

“With U.S. airports in need of \$100 billion in infrastructure improvements in the next five years, the *FLIGHT Act* is a positive step forward in helping general aviation airports better serve their communities,” said Kevin Burke, president and CEO of Airports Council International – North America (ACI-NA).

Todd Hauptli, President and CEO of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) added, “We appreciate the leadership of Sens. Inhofe and Duckworth in advancing the cause of general aviation airports through this legislation and look forward to working with them and their colleagues to ensure airports of all sizes have the resources they need to repair aging facilities and accommodate increasing demand.”