



# ***EAA Corporate Communications: Supporting Government Relations***

---

***Heightening awareness of, and satisfaction with, EAA's government advocacy. Enhancing perceptions of this work's relevance and value.***

---

---

## **Strategy Overview**

### **Back to Basics**

The results of a member research study conducted by Ty Ragland Associates showed that effective government relations is a "basic expectation" of membership in EAA. It is a fundamental element of the membership-value equation, without which members may lose their affinity to the organization.

Communication is one of the only means by which EAA may deliver this value to its members. Without telling the members about its efforts and successes in influencing general-aviation policy, EAA would rely on other news-reporting services to deliver this key component of value.

Relying on independent news reporting, and the members' attention to it, is too risky. Therefore, a sound communication strategy is an essential element of EAA's government-relations offering to its members.

### ***Need for Improvement***

This document lays out a strategy to bring about a quantum shift in EAA's approach to communicating about its government-relations (GR) goals, efforts, and accomplishments. Today, EAA communicates extensively regarding its GR role, but empirical evidence and the results of EAA membership and prospect polls suggest that EAA's GR-related messages get lost in the blizzard of information that EAA distributes, they lack thematic continuity, and, therefore, they are difficult for important audiences to retain and recall.

Consequently, EAA is not exploiting the value of its GR work in attracting and retaining members. EAA is missing an opportunity to package and present messages regarding its GR role in a way that conveys value to recreational-aviation enthusiasts.

EAA's member and prospect research suggests that members expect the association to execute effective government relations, and EAA's failure to do so would lead to members feeling disenfranchised.

The shortcomings in EAA's GR-related communications mean more than missed opportunity: the aforementioned research suggests that EAA risks losing members if it does not improve its communications on GR subjects. EAA's members have a clear expectation that their association will provide effective government advocacy of their access to, and right to enjoy, recreational aviation. If EAA fails to make its GR communications more cogent, more relevant to the member's experience, more conspicuous, and more memorable, the association could alienate members and inadvertently discourage renewals.

### ***Broad Goals***

Confronting the risks and seizing the opportunities outlined above require EAA to adopt a new approach to its communications regarding its GR role, activities, and accomplishments. The following broad goals should drive the development and execution of this new approach:

- ▶ Heighten key audiences’ awareness of EAA government- and industry-relations work. Improve audience members’ ability to retain and recall information about these activities.
- ▶ Enhance these audiences’ perceptions of the relevance and value of EAA’s government-relations work. Heighten their appreciation of, and satisfaction with, these efforts through improved communications.
- ☆ Position heightened appreciation and satisfaction mentioned above as compelling rationale for joining or renewing membership in EAA.
- ☆ Differentiate EAA’s approach to government advocacy from that of other general-aviation organizations.
- ▶ Inculcate the aforementioned goals into the operations of every EAA message originator.

*These two bullets at right are the key outcomes sought by this communication strategy. Show members that EAA’s unique approach gets results and merits their support.*

## **Success Measurements for GR Communications**

The first step in engineering a new approach to GR communications is to identify the measurements by which to determine success. Based on the aforementioned observations, the most important audience to the GR communications strategy is made up of EAA’s members, with the most important goal of the strategy being to position the value of EAA’s GR role so as to influence the decision to renew membership in EAA.

Accordingly, measurements of EAA members’ awareness of, and satisfaction with, EAA’s GR work are primary communications success determinants. EAA’s five-year business plan lays out the following benchmarks to which to strive, starting from a baseline determined through a membership survey:

*EAA MarCom will test the validity of these expectations, and either affirm or adjust these benchmarks.*

	<b>Year 0 Feb. 2006</b>	<b>Year 1 Feb. 2007</b>	<b>Year 2 Feb. 2008</b>	<b>Year 3 Feb. 2009</b>	<b>Year 4 Feb. 2010</b>	<b>Year 5 2011</b>
<b>Member Awareness</b>						
Lobbying Efforts	77%	80%	82%	83%	84%	85%
Regulatory Impact	68%	73%	75%	77%	79%	80%
<b>Member Satisfaction</b>						
Lobbying Efforts	84%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%
Regulatory Impact	79%	80%	81%	82%	83%	85%

Before adopting these benchmarks as performance objectives and measurements, EAA’s Marketing and Communications Department (MarCom) is reexamining these numbers, looking at their origins and the assumptions on which improvement projections are based. MarCom must also determine whether the original methodology for determining the baseline responses can be duplicated. If not, MarCom will develop another approach to measuring and establishing benchmarks.

Other GR communications success measurements may include:

- ▶ member participation rates in grassroots calls to action, such as e-mail or letter-writing campaigns, marches, demonstrations, etc.;
- ▶ overall member-satisfaction polling data, following up on the Ty Ragland research;
- ▶ website-user visits, click-throughs, and repeat visits to new web pages consolidating EAA’s GR advocacy information; and
- ▶ qualitative feedback solicited via the website and EAA publications.
- ▶ EAA’s members’ renewal rate.

## Responsibility and Accountability

### Accountabilities:

- ▷ **EAA GR:** scorecard of wins/losses on policy goals
- ▷ **EAA MarCom:** member/prospect awareness, satisfaction, perceived value
- ▷ **Shared:** understanding of members' priorities, and selection of meaningful advocacy issues to advance and communicate about.

As for responsibility and accountability, EAA's GR arm will determine its success according to its effectiveness in influencing policy in favor of general aviation. Hence, the GR arm will focus on its "win/loss ratio" in helping to advance or block policies according to EAA members' interests.

EAA's Marketing and Communications (MarCom) arm, on the other hand, is responsible for outcomes related to how well the organization communicates to and persuades the audience of EAA members and prospects. Thus, the aforementioned measurements of awareness, satisfaction, and perceived value related to EAA's GR work is the province of EAA MarCom.

However, GR and MarCom share an important accountability: understanding EAA members' and prospects' concerns and priorities. In other words, both arms are responsible for the selection of the right issues to prioritize in communications about EAA's government-advocacy work, in accordance with members' wishes. These issues should not only represent the interests of general aviation but also deliver the kind of value and satisfaction that influence the audience to renew membership in EAA. Surveys and polls will shed light on whether EAA is advocating, and communicating about, the right issues in the eyes of the member.

## Inversion of Approach to GR Communications

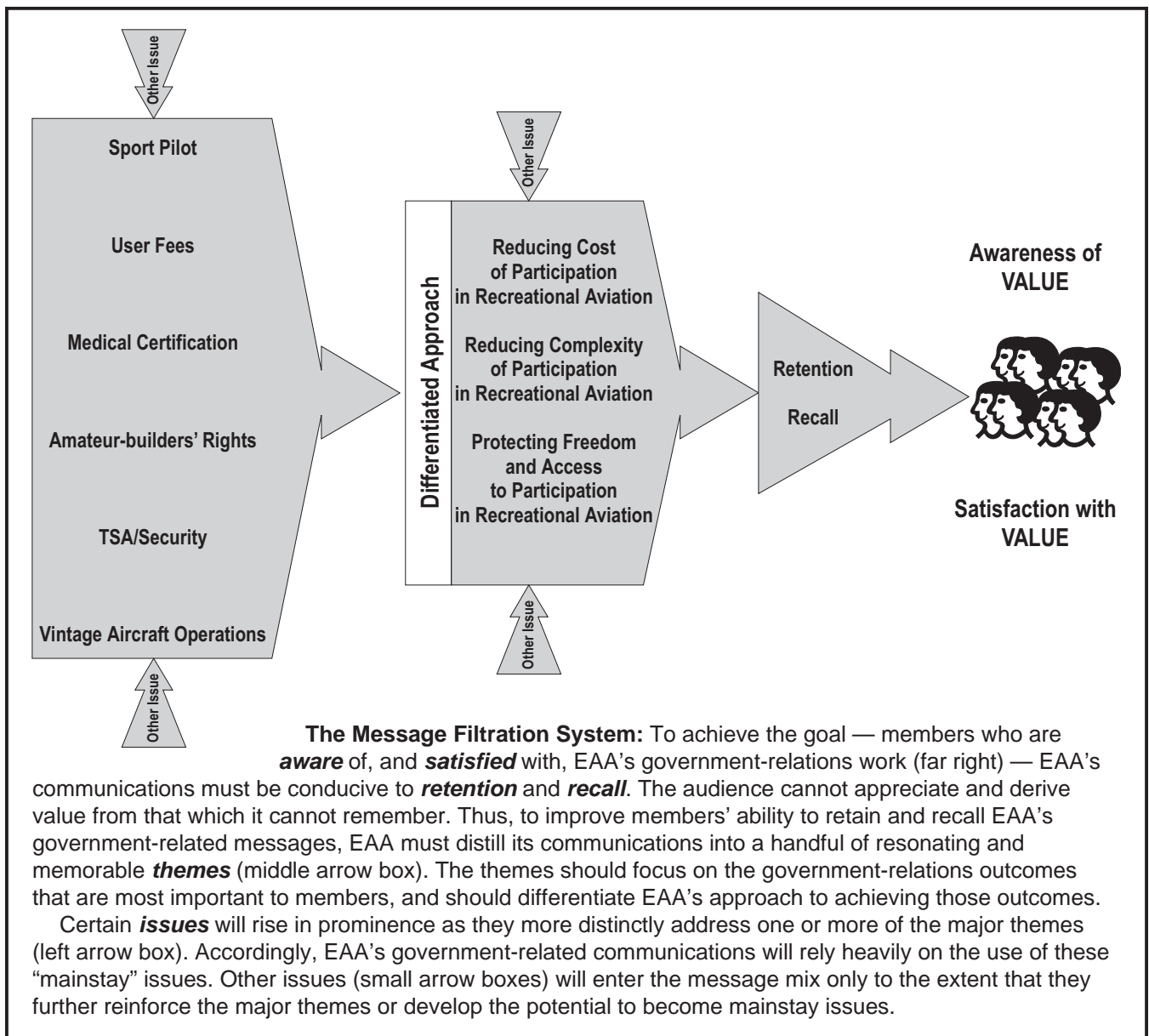
Government-relations communications at EAA have typically followed a news-reporting model – that is, the communications apparatus follows piecemeal policy-issue developments and reports them to the members via various channels. However, a new advocacy-oriented communication model would place communication objectives and desired audience outcomes in front of the news-tracking process.

Accordingly, this "inverted" approach would entail first identifying a manageable set of themes that resonate with the audiences. Then the communications machine would find ways to report on and discuss various GR activities that reinforce the themes and advance the desired audience outcomes. In so doing, communications would identify and dedicate most of its messages to a handful of mainstay issues that best advance those themes.

This approach would recognize that distilling, simplifying, and repeating the essential, theme-related messages will enhance the audiences' awareness, satisfaction, retention and recall relating to EAA's GR role and activities.

The graphic at the top of the next page further illustrates this approach to communicating about EAA's government-relations work.

*Use GR issues and activities to reinforce themes that are meaningful to the audience.*



*Every message that EAA communicates regarding its government-affairs work should point to one or more of these theme elements!*

### **Focus on Themes**

This single statement captures the themes driving EAA’s government-relations communications: *EAA’s unique approach to Government Relations work aims at, and often succeeds in, mitigating the cost and complexity of participation in recreational aviation while protecting enthusiasts’ freedom and access to personal flight.*

However, a particular communication piece does not necessarily have to tell that whole story. It might instead focus on only one element:

- ▶ employing a unique approach — *constructive engagement* — in working with government,
- ▶ reducing the cost of participation in recreational aviation,
- ▶ reducing the complexity and difficulty of participation in recreational aviation, or
- ▶ upholding participants’ rights and access to enjoy personal flight.

Such messages lead to the conclusion that EAA’s government-relations work merits ongoing support and provides ample rationale for joining or renewing membership in EAA. From a PR/Communications perspective, pointing to that conclusion is the ultimate objective of communicating on the subject of EAA’s government-relations activities.

---

## Primary Techniques

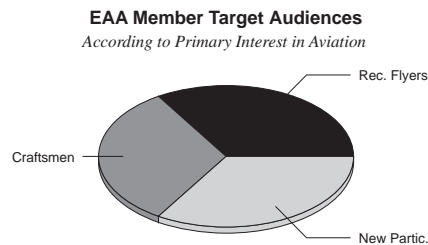
Here is a checklist of the major changes in approach – the message focus, the processes, and the procedures – aimed at bringing about improvements to EAA’s communication of its GR role and activities:

- ▶ Improve the information-collection process, with EAA MarCom taking a more active role in seeking information to fold into the major advocacy message campaign.
- ▶ Craft all messages to project one or more of the relevant themes. That is, EAA’s unique approach to GR work aims at, and often succeeds in, mitigating the cost and complexity of participation in recreational aviation, while protecting enthusiasts’ freedom and access to personal flight.
- ▶ Select a limited number – three to five – major issues on which to focus EAA’s GR-related communications. From these major issues, develop a cadre of core messages.
- ▶ Make a conscious effort to exclude some information from the communication mix if it does not illustrate the relevance theme, does not relate to at least one of the selected major issues, and does not otherwise advance the broad goals of this communication strategy.
- ▶ Distill, simplify, and repeat the core messages.
- ▶ Consolidate and segregate GR-related information in EAA communication vehicles.
- ☆ Direct all messages toward the conclusion that, because of its value and effectiveness, EAA’s GR work merits ongoing support and provides ample rationale for joining or renewing membership in EAA.
- ▶ Craft most messages using a tone that reflects EAA’s overriding approach to government relations: *constructive engagement*. Make strategic decisions regarding tone before deviating from the posture and voice of *constructive engagement*.
- ▶ Whenever possible, employ a review process that ensures quality and accuracy of the information, but also is streamlined.
- ▶ Establish clearer success measurements and accountabilities.
- ▶ Predetermine an annual information cycle, with appropriately placed peaks and valleys, for the dissemination of GR-related communications.
- ▶ Establish streamlined procedures for emergency and crisis communications.
- ▶ Dedicate additional resources, particularly qualified and proficient man-hours, toward the fulfillment of the goals and ambitions of EAA’s GR communications.

*This is the key outcome that this communication strategy seeks.*

---

# Audiences and Message Objectives (Desired Outcomes)



When appropriate, EAA will tailor its GR messages according to the three major interest groups of roughly equal proportion among the members: recreational flyers, craftsmen, and new participants.

## ***EAA Members***

- ▶ Messages lead members to conclude that the value of EAA's government-relations work merits the annual investment required to be a member of EAA. Thus, messages result in member acquisitions and, particularly, renewals.
- ▶ Messages lead members to conclude that EAA's regulatory work mitigates the costs and complexities associated with participation in recreational aviation, and protects their freedom and access to personal flight.
- ▶ Each member, regardless of special-interest predilection, develops an appreciation for all of EAA's government-relations work – not only efforts that affect the member personally but also those that help other members and demonstrate EAA's commitment to protecting and advancing all recreational flight.

## ***Prospective Members***

- ▶ Aviation enthusiasts and new participants know and understand that EAA provides a government-representation service that differs from that of other general-aviation organizations.
- ▶ They perceive EAA's unique government-relations role as worthy of their support via membership in the organization.

## ***Ancillary Audiences***

### ***News Media***

- ▶ News reporters understand that EAA is a powerful player in influencing general-aviation policy.
- ▶ Reporters know they can turn to EAA for reliable answers and guidance on aviation-related government issues.

### ***Government, Agencies, Policymakers***

- ▶ They understand that effective government representation is important to EAA members.
- ▶ They appreciate EAA's strength, believing that EAA can rally the troops behind grassroots efforts whenever necessary.
- ▶ They perceive EAA as a constructive, resourceful, competent, and credible partner in the formation of policies affecting general aviation, particularly those regarding recreational flight.

### ***Aviation and Business Communities***

- ▶ They perceive EAA as the foremost advocate of recreational-aviation interests in the government arena.
- ▶ They are eager to cooperate and collaborate with EAA on advocacy matters.
- ▶ Their understanding of EAA's government-relations work further reinforces their perceived value of, and esteem for, the organization.
- ▶ Donors, in particular, understand the important role of EAA's government-relations work in making possible EAA's youth-education and historic-preservation efforts.

---

# Operating Parameters

## ***Writing Considerations***

- ▶ Position EAA's GR work as a compelling reason to join or renew membership in EAA.
- ▶ Enhance awareness of EAA's GR issues and efforts, improving audiences' ability to retain and recall the information.
- ▶ Make issues broadly relevant to the EAA membership, showing how EAA GR works to mitigate costs, complexities, and hassles that would otherwise accompany the pursuit of recreational aviation as a pastime.
- ▶ Usher communications on particular issues through a message life cycle:
  - ▶ provide background and education;
  - ▶ report on developments, relating the stories to their relevance and membership appeal;
  - ▶ report on outcomes, relating them (especially the favorable ones) to EAA's efforts; and
  - ▶ reflect on favorable outcomes when reporting on new efforts.

## ***Communication Stewardship Process***

*EAA Communications will take the lead in restructuring the monthly meeting to focus on the important message themes.*

- ▶ Government- and Industry-Relations (GR) staff report meaningful issues and developments to EAA Communications through various channels, including:
  - ▶ monthly GR/Comm meeting,
  - ▶ weekly pow-wow among EAA's GR and Communications staff,
  - ▶ direct report to Communications as significant developments arise,
  - ▶ periodic status checks from EAA Communications.
- ▶ Communications Director David Berkley serves as lead; Communications Specialist Dick Knapinski serves as backup.
- ▶ Communications and GR determine various messages' priority level and availability of resources to communicate those messages.
- ▶ Communications determines execution steps (use communication-vehicles worksheet when appropriate):
  - ▶ issue/development
  - ▶ audiences
  - ▶ primary message
  - ▶ life cycle stage(s)
  - ▶ vehicles
  - ▶ timing
  - ▶ review requirements
  - ▶ evaluation
  - ▶ follow-up

- ▶ Communications assigns message principal (use communication-vehicles worksheet when appropriate), pulling staff as needed from:
  - ▶ Communications (David Berkley, Dick Knapinski)
  - ▶ Marketing (Scott Dementer)
  - ▶ Publications (David Hipschman, Rick Reynolds, Mary Jones)
- ▶ Principal guides message through essential steps (use communication-vehicles worksheet when appropriate):
  - ▶ creation
  - ▶ tailoring for vehicles
  - ▶ packaging
  - ▶ delivery
  - ▶ reporting/follow-up

## ***Timing Considerations***

**A**n important component of a work plan for government-relations communications will be the development of a calendar for determining the peaks and valleys in EAA's communications on this subject. Although this strategy contemplates providing the key audiences, especially EAA members, a steady diet of government-relations information, it also foresees the need to ration this information at some times and to provide it in higher volume at others.

Current discussions in this area are contemplating major communication peaks in the September/October window, and in the April/May window. These periods represent "off peak" times for the government-relations staff. Thus, during these periods they are more free to focus efforts on collaboration with EAA Communications on an information blitz.

These periods also represent a good opportunity to reach the membership audience when it is not being bombarded with competing messages regarding other EAA activities, particularly AirVenture.

## ***Resources Requirements***

**N**either EAA Communications nor EAA Government Relations currently can meet the staffing requirements to fulfill the ambitions of this strategy. Communicating about government-relations issues will require more ongoing stewardship and shepherding than other subjects might demand.

*Dedicated staffing will be required.*

This subject matter is most appropriately handled by a communications specialist for whom the execution of this strategic plan is a top priority. EAA MarCom estimates that the proper execution of this plan would consume one-half to two-thirds of a full-time communications specialists' time.



---

## Core Issues and Messages

Separate talking-points documents will lay out more detailed messages, facts, and arguments under each of the major themes. The more broad statements specified below should be at the heart of EAA's commentary on these issues, regardless of the depth and detail that any particular discussion merits.

### ***Overriding Message on EAA's Approach:***

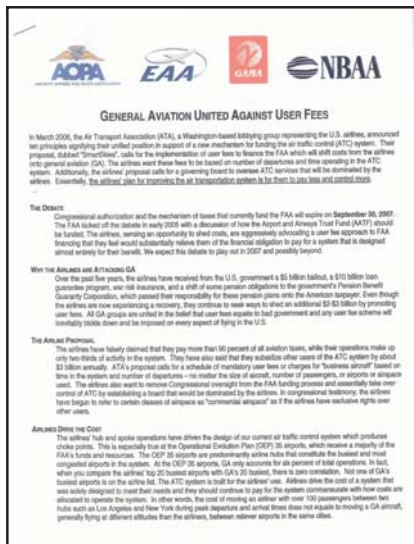
- ▶ Because of its effective approach and grassroots strength of 170,000 committed members, EAA is trusted and respected in government and general-aviation circles. Consequently, EAA is able to do much more than identify problems and complain about them. Rather, EAA is able to exert its influence toward creating and implementing solutions that improve the ease, affordability, and enjoyment of EAA members' participation in recreational aviation.
- ▶ The value of EAA's government- and industry-relations work alone is ample rationale for joining EAA and renewing membership each year.
- ▶ EAA's collaborative approach allows for proactive advocacy. Because EAA maintains constructive relationships with government and, therefore, can better monitor unfolding developments, in many cases EAA has been able to preemptively create solutions even before an issue develops into a problem.

*This is the factor that differentiates EAA from other aviation-related membership organizations.*

### ***Issue: Sport Pilot***

- ▶ With EAA leading the charge, the sport pilot movement is making fun flight more affordable and hassle-free. EAA worked in government and general-aviation circles for more than a decade to bring to aviation enthusiasts sport pilot's benefit in reducing costs, time commitments, and barriers to pursuing personal flight.
- ▶ Thanks to EAA's tenaciousness, sport pilot removes unnecessary medical scrutiny, eliminating tedious and costly medical exams and paperwork. Some will save thousands of dollars annually. The inroads EAA made in eliminating unnecessary medical scrutiny for sport pilots pave the way to the possibility of eventually having more reasonable medical-certification practices for all of general aviation.
- ▶ As the chief architect of sport pilot, EAA accomplished a major stride of deregulation in general aviation – making recreational flight more accessible and affordable, with fewer governmental hassles and bureaucratic hoops. Sport pilot reduces paperwork, removes unnecessary medical scrutiny, simplifies training requirements, and makes government oversight of manufacturing and production processes more efficient, resulting in lower costs.
- ▶ EAA's leadership of the sport pilot movement is a success! In only two short years since sport pilot's inception, the movement has achieved the following milestones:

- ▶ more than three-dozen new, affordable, ready-to-fly aircraft are now available for purchase by sport pilots, for one-quarter to one-half of the cost of traditional new, factory-built airplanes;
- ▶ more than 400 new sport pilot certificates have been issued as of August 1, 2006;
- ▶ more than 100 sport pilot instructors are now certificated;
- ▶ more than 500 light-sport aircraft are on the FAA register (not counting type-certificated and amateur-built aircraft that are also eligible to be flown by sport pilots);
- ▶ more than 200 designated pilot examiners are authorized to give sport pilot flight tests (checkrides);
- ▶ more than 1,300 prospects have applied for the sport pilot airman knowledge (written) test;
- ▶ more than 2,100 EAA ultralight transition kits have been distributed in two years; and
- ▶ the Light Aircraft Manufacturing Association (LAMA) has created an audit program that assures manufacturers and consumers that new light-sport aircraft meet established ASTM International standards.



With AirVenture 2006 serving as the venue for general aviation's premier industrywide panel objecting to the commercial airlines' call for user fees, EAA continues to work closely with industry partners to combat this mounting threat.

## Issue: User Fees

- ▶ EAA opposes the adoption of user fees in any form as a revenue-collection vehicle for funding the United States' air traffic control system (ATC). Recent history in other countries and common sense indicate that any initial user fee scheme will eventually trickle down and be imposed on every aspect of flying in the U.S.
- ▶ The push for user fees is driven by the airlines, which seek to pay less while controlling more of the nation's air space. The ATC system was built for the airlines' use, and their operations drive the costs of that system. They should continue to pay in a manner commensurate with their contribution to the costs of that system.
- ▶ There is no need. The budget of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has remained remarkably stable. Certainly, modernization of the nation's ATC system is needed, and will have to be financed, but a comprehensive plan that improves management and capacity, and delineates projected costs and savings, should be developed and debated before funding mechanisms are adopted.
- ▶ The airlines also want to steal our national air space resource from the citizenry, by proposing the removal of Congressional oversight of the Federal Aviation Administration's funding process. Rather, the airlines propose the establishment of an oversight board that would be dominated by the airlines.
- ▶ The use of user fees to fund the nation's ATC system would backfire against its intended purpose: Rather than increase funding and lend stability to the revenue-collection process, user fees would create an inefficient government bureaucracy and would subject the revenue stream to the vagaries of economic fluctuations.
- ▶ User fees are also a safety-of-flight issue. Fees for services would create a disincentive against pilots using services that enhance flight-planning, navigation, and the avoidance of other air traffic.

- ▶ The airlines' lobbying representative, the Air Transport Association (ATA), will likely pander to the traveling public with the claim that air fares could be modestly reduced if only the general aviation set, those affluent owners of aircraft, would pay more. EAA knows well that much of the general aviation population is made up of enthusiasts representing the middle class who would not be able to participate if flying becomes less affordable. They already pay their fair share through fuel taxes, and shouldn't have to shoulder any part of the airlines' share.

### ***Issue: Medical Certification***

- ▶ EAA and its members have led the charge to make medical certification requirements better match the type of flying in which a pilot participates. That's why, after 10 years of lobbying, EAA was successful in advocating the adoption of an appropriate medical standard – a valid state driver's license and self-certification – for sport pilot aviators.
- ▶ During her Meet the Administrator session at EAA AirVenture Oshkosh 2006, Marion Blakey acknowledged that the dramatic reduction of the waiting period for medical waivers is the result of collaboration between EAA and the FAA. Consequently, the average waiting time for a special issuance waiver has been reduced from several months to 16 days. "We've come to count on EAA for sound recommendations, and you came through," she said.
- ▶ A major accomplishment of EAA's advocacy has been the expansion of authority for aviation medical examiners (AMEs). The list of conditions for which they may now issue waivers on the spot has grown from 20 to 35.
- ▶ EAA will not rest on its laurels regarding its accomplishments in reducing the medical-certification backlog. Now that FAA has adopted EAA-recommended quick-fix solutions, EAA is refining proposals for more systemic, long-term solutions that would dramatically reduce medical-certification barriers to the enjoyment of recreational aviation.

### ***Issue: Amateur Builders' Rights***

- ▶ EAA holds a key leadership position on the FAA-assembled Amateur-Built Aviation Rulemaking Committee with one interest in mind: preserving the rights of amateur aircraft builders. Earl Lawrence, EAA's vice president of regulatory and industry affairs, serves as committee cochair. EAA's participation and leadership on this committee provide an effective avenue for protecting the rights of EAA-member builders, craftsmen, kit-assemblers, and restorers.
- ▶ The actions of those attempting to circumvent the "51% Rule" with excessive commercial or professional-builder assistance have drawn the FAA's scrutiny, putting the rights and privileges of all amateur builders at risk. EAA and its members must lead the charge in upholding the recreational aviation community, and specifically the amateur-building sector, as a responsible group. Conscientious

observation of the letter and spirit of the “51% Rule” by both vendors and customers will forestall the government’s inclination to regulate home builders further.

- ▶ EAA’s message to the recreational aviation community: Cutting corners on the “51% Rule” is a disservice to the educational and recreational function for which the aircraft-building experience is intended.
- ▶ Amateur building of aircraft represents recreational aviation’s, and EAA’s, roots. The influence of the amateur-building movement has been enormous. For example, the use of composite materials – prevalent in many of today’s most sophisticated air and space vehicles – stems from the homebuilding movement. The amateur-building movement has served as a primary source of innovation from which all of aviation has benefited. For these reasons and the remarkable educational and recreational opportunities that amateur building provides, EAA and its members must continue to champion the rights and privileges of individuals seeking to build and fly their own aircraft.