



The Leader In Recreational Aviation

Chapter 736 Newsletter for September 2013

Post Fly-In Cookout

Our post fly-in cookout and August monthly meeting was fun and informative. Everyone had plenty to eat and I can attest that the bugs that live at the Pittsfield Municipal Airport also had lots to chew on. I itched for days.

A few photos:



Industry Lobby Groups Prepared to Take On FAA

The alphabets are angry. Reflecting the growing frustration of their members, presidents of the trade associations tasked with representing general aviation interests showed up at this year's EAA AirVenture with both barrels loaded full of criticism for the FAA and for the congressional oversight of the agency. The rhetoric was a marked shift from the traditional message of cooperation with the FAA. Other than controllers and their supervisors, top FAA officials, including agency Administrator Michael Huerta, were

conspicuously absent from this year's AirVenture, allegedly because of federal budget sequestration. It was the first time an FAA Administrator has skipped the event in many years.

EAA chairman Jack Pelton set the tone at his opening-day news conference sporting a button reading "It's Not Over," in reference to the EAA's pending federal court challenge of the \$479,000 in fees that the FAA assessed AirVenture for ATC services.

Pelton has also enlisted U.S. senator, pilot and long-time EAA member James Inhofe (R-Okla.) to broach the topic with incoming U.S. transportation secretary Anthony Foxx.

'Stronger Together'

The assessment of those fees appears to have been the tipping point for many GA groups, persuading them to take a more combative stand toward the FAA in defense of GA interests. At a "stronger together" forum of GA group presidents the day after Pelton's press conference, both NBAA president Ed Bolen and General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) president Pete Bunce invoked red-meat rhetoric usually reserved for gatherings of the National Rifle Association, doing everything but holding propellers over their heads and saying "from my cold, dead hands" will government take these.

Bolen warned that "the ability to tax is the ability to destroy." He sees a clear and present danger in that ability being shifted from elected officials, who are accountable to the public, to non-elected bureaucrats. "These are dangerous precedents," he emphasized, in clear reference to the FAA's new fees on AirVenture and other airshows.

Bunce advocated that Congress "beat the FAA on the head and say 'stop this madness,'" referring to the obstacles for certification of new light aircraft.

The message resonated with attendees. During the week, the crowd pinned on "It's Not Over" buttons, and thousands signed EAA petition boards in opposition to the new fees.

Fifty-year pilot and EAA member Bob Evans seemed typical of EAA members. Evans said the controversy is motivating him to get more involved in the political process and talk to other pilots about it. "There needs to be pressure from the grass roots" and from the trade associations, Evans said. "There is a definite response and a backlash to this."

There was little evidence that EAA members were venting their animus on air traffic controllers working the show, although there did seem to be an absence of controllers in their hallmark pink shirts roaming the grounds during their off hours as in years past.

A controller staffing the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (Natca) tent said that EAA hospitality shown controllers at the show "was great, just as in years past," but that a few people had stopped by the Natca tent to voice complaint. "We understand the

frustration on both sides of the issue. [Due to federal budget sequestration] we're getting hammered. They've [the FAA] slowed modernization and stopped hiring. Most of our training has gone back to nothing and there are facilities that live on overtime because they are short-staffed. It's been pretty rough."

Aside from the operational issues caused by sequestration, the political calculus may need to change before the atmospherics for GA improve measurably in Washington. At the "stronger together" forum, Bolen noted the growing membership of the General Aviation Caucus on Capitol Hill, whose members typically oppose things such as FAA user fees. However, Bolen acknowledged that caucus membership is nearly, but still short of, 50 percent in the House of Representatives and 30 percent in the Senate. "That's a lot of support," Bolen noted, but shy of the majority in each body required to reliably block measures that would impede GA and advance measures to strengthen it, now and in the future.

DOT, FAA Comment on FCC 121.5 ELT Proposal

DOT and FAA remain strongly against the FCC's proposal, noting that while the agencies "agree that 406 MHz ELT technology is an advance over that used in 121.5 MHz-only ELTs ... 49 U.S.C. § 44712(d) sets forth Congress's unequivocal intent to permit the use of 121.5 ELTs in civil aircraft" and that "[w]e continue to find that voluntary equipage and the use of other new technologies best address this recommendation."

"This is the third time that the FCC is attempting to insert itself into aviation safety regarding ELTs, and the third time the FAA politely asked them to drop the issue," said Doug Macnair, EAA vice president of government relations. "Hopefully the third time is a charm, and the FCC will permanently excuse itself from the business of trying to regulate aviation safety devices, which is the FAA's duty."

EAA is firmly against the proposal, which would make operating aircraft using a 121.5 MHz ELT illegal and require a switch to 406 MHz ELTs.

"The cost associated with such a major, sweeping regulation is completely out of step with whatever, if any, safety benefits would come with having fleet-wide 406 MHz ELTs," Macnair said. "The FCC, however, inexplicably continues trying to force this \$500 million overreach onto aviation."

Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Monday, Sept. 16th** at the Weathervane Restaurant in Waterville. As is our usual practice (just in case you've forgotten), please arrive by 6:00 pm if you plan to have dinner so that the meeting can begin at its normal time of 7:30 pm.