



The Leader In Recreational Aviation

Chapter 736 Newsletter for September 2015

Larger issues could delay medical reform, reauthorization

Ongoing controversy over big political issues, as well as limited floor time available to debate and vote on bills in Congress, is almost certain to delay FAA reauthorization legislation, along with the third class medical reforms that legislation is expected to contain, AOPA leaders said.

With very few legislative days scheduled in September and major national and international issues like the Iran nuclear deal and funding for Planned Parenthood taking the spotlight, it would be virtually impossible for Congress to pass long-term FAA reauthorization legislation before the agency's funding expires Sept. 30. More likely is a six-month extension that would give Congress time to keep working toward a more comprehensive agreement.

There's a lot of uncertainty in the congressional schedule right now, something that's really out of our control, AOPA said. But we're going to keep doing everything we can to get medical reform for our members as quickly as possible.

That includes pursuing stand-alone legislation in the form of Pilot's Bill of Rights 2. The legislation was introduced in the House and Senate in February and continues to gain momentum, with another 11 lawmakers signing on as co-sponsors during the August recess. That brings the total number of co-sponsors to 136 in the House and 58 in the Senate.

Having a lot of cosponsors shows that the Pilot's Bill of Rights 2 has the support it needs, and that improves the chances it will come to a vote. And a legislative solution, whether through a stand-alone bill or as an amendment to other legislation, is the most promising course. An FAA notice of proposed rule-making on medical reform has been held up at the Department of Transportation for more than a year with no sign of movement.

In July, GA supporters tried to attach medical reform language to the Senate's surface transportation bill, but the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) threw up a roadblock, opposing some of the provisions in the amendment. AOPA leaders say they would like to have ALPA on board and are continuing to discuss their concerns, but will keep pushing for reforms regardless.

With so many different issues affecting the current political situation, it's likely that final medical reform legislation may be somewhat different from the language now in the Pilot's Bill of Rights 2.

Flight Watch frequency end date changed to Sept. 24

The FAA will discontinue the use of the dedicated Flight Watch radio frequency 122.0 MHz on Sept. 24, a week earlier than the previously announced end date for the En Route Flight Advisory Service (EFAS) frequency.

The FAA changed the implementation date to Sept. 24 from Oct. 1 because all necessary preparations will be completed earlier than planned.

Services provided by EFAS will continue to be offered over published Flight Service frequencies and on 122.2 MHz, the universal frequency for contacting Flight Service.

After its discontinuation, 122.0 MHz will be monitored for six months so pilots may be directed to other frequencies appropriate for their flight.

The FAA will publish a notam advising of the new end date. The agency also will send out a [FAAST Blast](#) email message and update the FAA website to announce the change.

AOPA [reported](#) Aug. 18 that the FAA had decided to discontinue 122.0 MHz as increasing numbers of pilots switch from traditional Flight Service assistance to more automated and Web-based information sources.

The change will give the agency an opportunity to eliminate redundancies and reduce underutilized services, and resolve issues of bleed-over and frequency congestion on 122.0 MHz, the FAA said.

Safety Spotlight: A sign of things to come?

Pilots lament the glacial pace of progress when it comes to installing affordable modern technology and equipment into the cockpits of their aircraft. When one thinks about other, non-aviation technologies that make our lives easier, Moore's law is in full effect—about every two years the capability of technology doubles. This is certainly the case with computers, smartphones, and innovation in other forms of transportation. But innovation and new technologies are very slow to find their way into GA aircraft. Why? For the most part, it's the time and expense required by a manufacturer to produce an FAA-certified product approved for installation into a type-certificated aircraft and the resulting cost of that product, which ultimately gets passed on to the consumer. These factors make the investment decision difficult for manufacturers and pilots alike.

One bright spot in the evolution of safety-enhancing technology is the angle of attack (AOA) indicator. For the first time since the Part 23 certification standards were written, at least for AOA, there's a new, streamlined process in place. The FAA recognized the safety benefits associated with having AOA information and under 14 CFR 21.8(d) adjusted the traditional certification process, making it possible for pilots to install this safety-enhancing equipment as a minor modification requiring only the signature of an airframe and powerplant mechanic.

The AOA “story” is hopefully just the first step by the FAA in recognizing that certification standards should be informed by a “risk-based, safety benefit” criteria and evolve away from the current certification standards that are dated, cumbersome, and drive costs into the process. This is important for several reasons. First, making it easier for manufacturers to give pilots new and proven products that will help lower costs—something we all can agree is a good thing. Next, the average age of the GA fleet is more than 40 years old. We have tens of thousands of aircraft flying around with state-of-the-art avionics from the 1970s, which is another way to say horribly outdated and unreliable. For safety reasons alone, we must update older aircraft with modern technologies.

Bringing modern safety-enhancing equipment into cockpits should not be difficult and clearly Experimentals have shown the way. These aircraft are not bound by legacy certification rules and type certificates and owners can pretty much install anything they want. Stroll down the flight line at EAA AirVenture or Sun 'n Fun and you'll see safe, capable aircraft with the latest high-tech, low-cost cockpit and engine technologies installed. Now, imagine a 1970s vintage, single-engine aircraft and think about the reliability of magnetos, vacuum pumps, instruments, and gyros that actually have things spinning in them. The mean time between failures of all these elderly systems working in concert has got to be about every other flight—and by modern standards, that isn't as safe as it should be. The costs to update that legacy aircraft with a modern, certified glass panel, autopilot, and nav/com would quickly add up to two to three times what the airplane is worth. No wonder innovation is stagnant! Compare and contrast this example with the latest low-cost glass panel, digital autopilot, and envelope protection software that can be installed in an Experimental aircraft, and the case becomes very clear. The FAA's legacy regulations and processes have simply not kept pace with technology nor supported safety improvements for tens of thousands of legacy aircraft.

If we want to continue to make improvements to safety in general aviation, moving towards a risk-based standard is a must. AOPA is working hard to make the case for safety and reduce the roadblocks that currently prevent the installation of new equipment onto the existing fleet of aircraft. This is one of the primary ways we will modernize the fleet, maintain its viability, and improve safety going forward.

Moore's law applies in all other facets of life; it should apply to GA also. One day soon hopefully all GA pilots will have low-cost options to update older aircraft with proven safety enhancing technologies such as glass panels, synthetic vision, terrain warning systems, and digital autopilots with envelope protection. One thing is clear—the current rules that govern what can and can't be installed in legacy aircraft are broken and need to change.

Next meeting

Our next meeting will be held at a **special place and time, Sept. 21st** at 7:00 pm at Jack West's hangar in Norridgewock to have a look at Bruce Patton's latest project, his CX4. At the meeting we will also have guests from Chapter 87.

Directions to Jack's house follow.

Going towards Farmington on Rt. 2, turn left on Wilder Hill Rd., the first road on the left after passing Airport Rd. (only a few yards away) in Norridgewock. Coming from Farmington, turn right just before reaching Airport Rd. After approximately 2 miles, follow the road straight, rather than take the right curve, onto Ross Hill Rd. Jack's hangar will be in view once you're on Ross Hill Rd on your left.