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June 23, 2008

Honorable Daniel K. Inouye
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science
and Transportation
U.S. Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6125

Dear Chairman Inouye:

As the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation considers climate change issues, I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm general aviation's commitment to reducing aircraft emissions and protecting our environment. On behalf of our 8,000 members across the country, National Business Aviation Association (NBAA) acknowledges that when it comes to general aviation operations, environmental stewardship is an imperative. We continually work to develop reasonable and balanced policies that support the industry's twin objectives of promoting mobility while minimizing its environmental footprint.

Although the industry represents a tiny fraction of transportation emissions, general aviation has long led the way in promoting advances aimed at minimizing its environmental footprint. For example, 20 years ago, the industry developed winglets for general aviation aircraft, which optimize aircraft performance and flight range, and contribute to a more efficient fuel burn, thereby reducing emissions. This equipment is now in place on a large number of general aviation aircraft.

The industry continues to reduce engine emissions through new technologies, which means that today's aircraft engines are cleaner, quieter, and more fuel-efficient than ever. In fact, general aviation turbine engines today are an average of 30 percent more fuel efficient than those certified in 1976 – and 50 percent more fuel efficient than those introduced in the 1960s.

Operational improvements supported by general aviation have also resulted in system efficiencies that help the environment. Over three years ago, NBAA members began equipping aircraft – at their own cost – with cockpit technology allowing for Reduced Vertical Separation Minimums, or RVSM, which effectively doubled the system's airspace capacity.

General aviation was also at the forefront of the development of automatic dependent surveillance-broadcast (ADS-B), the cornerstone for aviation system modernization and capacity expansion, because it allows for optimal efficiencies in routing, approaches and other uses of the aviation system.

In addition, NBAA members supported the development of precision approach procedures, which likewise produce efficiencies by enabling operators to custom-tailor flight paths, minimizing fuel burn and noise, while preserving operational safety.

Going forward, NBAA will continue to look for ways to further reduce our environmental footprint.

We also believe that an effective way to reduce emissions is to continue the work already done to implement a more efficient Next Generation, or "NextGen" aviation system based on satellite technology. The Government Accountability Office has cited FAA data showing that "the full implementation of NextGen could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft by up to 12 percent by 2025."

NBAA commends the Commerce Committee for its work to modernize our system and expedite the transition to NextGen. We support the recent Senate agreement on FAA funding and look forward to working with the Committee to complete work on FAA reauthorization and aviation system modernization this year, so that the potential for significantly reducing aircraft emissions can be fully realized.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Regards,

Edward M. Bolen
President and CEO