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# AOPA ePILOT

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## FAA Funding Debate

### FAA FUNDING PROPOSAL BAD FOR AIRPORTS, TOO

The Bush administration's proposed FAA funding bill would be a step backward for smaller general aviation airports, AOPA President Phil Boyer told the Iowa Aviation Conference in Des Moines on April 3. "The FAA's bill would cut the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) by almost one-third, gutting \$1 billion from the program," Boyer said. "It would remove the funding entitlement for the smallest GA airports, and it would reduce the federal matching amount, making it even harder for cash-strapped municipalities to come up with their share of the money for airport improvements." Boyer also explained to the conference, which included airport managers and government officials, the impact of the proposal on GA pilots. See [AOPA Online](#).



### BLAKEY OUT OF TOUCH WITH 'JOE PILOT'

Pay attention to the people who pay. That's what a senior AOPA executive told dealers and manufacturers attending the Aircraft Electronics Association convention last week in Reno, Nevada. "Representing more than 411,000 members, I can tell you that 88 percent will reduce their flying significantly if the Bush administration's proposal to quadruple aviation gas taxes is enacted," said Andy Cebula, AOPA executive vice president of government affairs. "And if they reduce their flying, they're going to cut back on their purchases of everything aviation related." Cebula cited AOPA polling data that showed that the majority of AOPA members would reduce their flying hours by up to 50 percent if the gas tax were increased to 70 cents per gallon. These data were in stark contrast to FAA Administrator Marion Blakey's assertion in her [speech to the convention](#) that the proposed tax increase wouldn't affect "Joe Pilot in a Cessna 172" because the increased hourly operating cost amounted to "the cost of a Starbucks latte." See [AOPA Online](#).

### USER FEES CAUSE 'DO IT YOURSELF' IFR APPROACHES IN U.K.

Watch an [eye-opening video interview](#) with businessman and pilot Steve Copeland and hear a chilling account of how user fees have adversely affected general aviation in Europe and the United Kingdom. Consider this: According to Copeland, there were only three private pilot instrument ratings issued in the U.K. last year. "In the U.K., very, very few people actually take up instrument flying because of the costs and time involved in it," Copeland told *AOPA Pilot* Editor-at-Large Thomas A. Horne. "People will tend to try and fly in marginal conditions and use DIY [do-it-yourself] instrument approaches to fly into smaller grass and tarmac airfields that don't have instrument approaches. They basically wing it, hoping that they can get in underneath the weather and not have to go to one of the major airports to do an instrument approach." This second installment of a four-part video report on user fees in Europe may explain why almost half of Europe's 90,000 GA pilots who fly powered aircraft hold FAA pilot certificates and ratings, and 30 percent of Europe's 60,000 powered GA aircraft carry N numbers.

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## TEPID SENATE RESPONSE TO ADMINISTRATION'S FAA FUNDING BILL

Significantly higher general aviation taxes and user fees don't seem to be sitting well with key members of the U.S. Senate. Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, honoring a request from the president, introduced the administration's FAA funding bill "as a courtesy" on March 30. While noting that the Next Generation Air Transportation System Financing Reform Act of 2007 was an "aggressive proposal" for FAA reauthorization, Inouye said, "I cannot support all portions of this bill... Specifically, I am troubled by the proposal to drastically increase the general aviation fuel tax and substantially cut the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding level." The ranking Republican on the committee, Sen. Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) said, "I echo Sen. Inouye's concerns with the proposal." Sen. Inouye said that he would work with the chairman of the Commerce aviation subcommittee, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), and ranking subcommittee member Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) to develop a bipartisan FAA funding bill that could be brought to the full Senate. AOPA has already met with Sen. Lott, and will meet with Sen. Rockefeller soon, to discuss alternatives to the administration's FAA funding proposal. See [AOPA Online](#).

## REP. UDALL QUESTIONS HOLDUPS IN NEXTGEN DEVELOPMENT

Yet another congressional committee is calling into question the Bush administration's justification for changing the FAA funding system and radically increasing general aviation fuel taxes. The FAA claims that it needs more taxes and user fees to fund the NextGen air traffic control modernization program. But Rep. Mark Udall (D-Colo.), chairman of the space and aeronautics subcommittee of the House Science and Technology Committee, questioned the government's ability to deliver on its NextGen promise. "I am troubled by indications that all may not be going as well as hoped with the NextGen effort," said Udall at a March 29 hearing. "We haven't yet seen a clear plan from FAA and the JPDO for implementing agreed-upon NextGen technologies and procedures into the National Airspace System expeditiously." The House Science and Technology Committee has jurisdiction over all non-defense research and development, and therefore the committee will play a significant role in shaping the FAA funding bill. See [AOPA Online](#).

For in-depth coverage of the FAA Funding Debate, see [AOPA Online](#).

## GA News

### BOYER APPOINTED TO PRESTIGIOUS GPS ADVISORY BOARD

GPS is ubiquitous now, used in almost every industry from agriculture to surveying and mapping, defense to aviation. And it does much more than provide highly accurate position and navigation information. The timing signals from the atomic clocks aboard the GPS satellites are critical to the efficient operation of cell phone systems, bank ATMs, even the electrical power grid. So that's why AOPA President Phil Boyer's recent appointment to the new National Space-Based Positioning, Navigation, and Timing (PNT) Advisory Board has importance far beyond aviation. The board held its first meetings last week in Washington, D.C. "I left with a new understanding of how GPS has become a public utility like electricity or water," said Boyer. "So many industries and consumers across the board now depend upon GPS. It makes me proud that AOPA was at the front of the pack some 17 years ago, [advocating that the GPS signal](#) be made available to the general public." See [AOPA Online](#).

### FAA SEEKS PILOT INPUT ON DEFINITION OF 'KNOWN ICING'

The FAA's general counsel published a [letter of interpretation](#) for comment on April 3 in the *Federal Register* regarding a proposed change in the definition of "known icing." This comes after a [request by AOPA](#) in November 2006 that the FAA rescind an interpretation by the agency's Eastern Region counsel, which said that "high relative humidity" combined with freezing temperatures could constitute known icing conditions. AOPA said such a definition would ground general aviation for most of the winter. Now the proposed letter of interpretation reads in part, "The ultimate decision whether, when, and where to make the flight rests

with the pilot. A pilot also must continue to reevaluate changing weather conditions. If the composite information indicates to a reasonable and prudent pilot that he or she will encounter visible moisture at freezing or near freezing temperatures and that ice will adhere to the aircraft along the proposed route and altitude of flight, then known icing conditions likely exist. If the AFM prohibits flight in known icing conditions and the pilot operates in such conditions, the FAA could take enforcement action." The FAA wants to know what pilots think of its new interpretation before making it final. See [AOPA Online](#).

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### **AOPA-SUPPORTED AIRSPACE PLAN MOVES FORWARD**

So far, so good. The FAA has selected a preferred air traffic management plan that covers a five-state area in the Northeast region. AOPA has been in support of the integrated airspace plan because it would provide the most operational benefit and flexibility for general aviation. The FAA is now deep into the process of redesigning ATC procedures in a 31,000-square-mile swath of airspace. The move is an effort to improve the efficiency and safety of aircraft operations in the New York, New Jersey, and Philadelphia metropolitan areas. The FAA's preferred plan would combine high- and low-altitude airspace to create more efficient arrival and departure routes. The airspace has not changed since the 1960s. The FAA expects to publish the final environmental impact statement sometime this summer. The agency will host [five informational meetings](#), one in each of the affected states, to discuss noise mitigation issues.

### **PILOT INPUT SAVES AIRPORT ADVISORY SERVICE**

Thanks to feedback from pilots who use the airport advisory service (AAS), the FAA has instructed Lockheed Martin to continue the service at the [20 airports it is currently offered](#). Last year, the FAA was considering allowing Lockheed to [discontinue AAS](#) and asked for pilot input. That's because AAS is offered only at airports with a flight service station on the field, and Lockheed is in the process of [consolidating some of those facilities](#). Many pilots stressed that AAS helped enhance safety in the airport environment. "Because of pilot input, AAS will continue to be provided at the existing 20 locations, even if the facility is no longer located at the airport," said Melissa Rudinger, AOPA vice president of regulatory affairs. "This is a perfect example of how involved pilots can influence what air traffic services are offered." With AAS, pilots receive airport information from flight service specialists, including weather updates, wind and altimeter information, runway usage, and any known traffic in the area.

### **THE CHAMP IS OFFICIALLY BACK**

[American Champion](#) has resurrected an old favorite, the Champ, and, just last week, received FAA certification. The airplane is unique because it was type certified thanks to its original production run, yet it falls within the light sport aircraft performance and weight limitations. That way it can be used to train private as well as sport pilots, plus it can do basic



aerobatics and have expanded commercial uses. The Champ has the classic-looking fuselage and modern refinements such as aluminum landing gear legs. It also has a Citabria wing, windows, and other shared parts. It holds 18 gallons of fuel and is powered by a Continental O-200 engine. The base price is \$85,900. American Champion has delivered the first one to its dealer in Florida, and it will be on display this month during Sun 'n Fun in Lakeland. The company says there has been strong interest in the airplane, and it plans to build 30 a year.

### **AMERICAN LEGEND TAKES ON RESTORATION BUSINESS**

[American Legend Aircraft](#) is so obsessed with extending the enjoyment of vintage airplanes, the company has created a restoration service to take it beyond factory-produced Legend Cubs. Called American Legend Aircraft Services, the new

company will repair, overhaul, or upgrade a range of tube-and-fabric aircraft. The Sulphur Springs, Texas, company says that the materials and processes associated with production airplanes share a lot in common with the restoration business.

### **BIPLANE PREPARES TO HOVER**

A San Francisco marketing company is poised to launch the world's first hovering biplane. How? Simple. Just bolt on a huge turboprop engine to a lightweight airframe. The

[Turbine Toucan](#) project seeks to shatter world records as well as entertain crowds. It was dreamed up by Infinity Entertainment as an entirely

new airshow experience, although Wayne Handley did something similar with his short-lived Oracle Turbo Raven monoplane. The biplane weighs 1,650 pounds, but it's powered by a 750-shaft-horsepower engine, delivering 3,000 pounds of thrust. Plans this year call for it to go after four world records, including the 1941 biplane airspeed record of 323 mph.



### **CIRRUS TO ISSUE SERVICE BULLETIN ON ROCKETS**

Cirrus Design plans to issue a mandatory service bulletin on its Cirrus Airframe Parachute System (CAPS) after a rocket on a Cirrus aircraft in Australia earlier this year was fired by the pilot during an emergency. The rocket followed an errant flight path and wrapped around the tail. The parachute did not come out, and the aircraft crashed, injuring the occupants. Testing with high-speed cameras—while resulting in uniformly successful CAPS deployments—did confirm that a part may prematurely move off the stationary launch tube and adversely affect rocket trajectory. [Cirrus Design](#), at its own expense, is getting a redesigned part made but must first train all its service centers to remove the rocket to replace the part. At this writing, Cirrus Design had issued an "Alert Service Advisory" but was planning to issue a mandatory service bulletin and to ask the FAA to issue an airworthiness directive. The alert service advisory said, "Do not hesitate to activate the CAPS system if acting otherwise would be life threatening." In 1.5 million fleet hours, there have been nine CAPS deployments, which have saved 21 lives.

### **WHEN A NICE DAY TURNS BAD**

The arrival of spring not only brings nature back to life, but most airports as well. Beautiful weather contributes to the urge to just hop in the airplane and go, but before launching, pilots should still take the time to check the weather. On April 20, 2005, the pilot of a Cessna 150 and his passenger departed Festus Memorial Airport in Festus, Missouri, for an afternoon jaunt over the local area. After takeoff, the pilot noticed dark clouds on the horizon and headed back to the airport. The Cessna crashed during the landing attempt. The pilot was killed, and the passenger was seriously injured. [Read more in this special report](#) prepared by the AOPA Air Safety Foundation, exclusively for *ePilot* readers.

### **EMBRY-RIDDLE GOES BALLISTIC**

Talk about applied science. Late last month students at [Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University](#) (ERAU) sent a two-stage rocket into the upper atmosphere. With 3,500 pounds of thrust in the first stage and 900 pounds in the second, school officials said it set a student-built vehicle record of 37.8 miles (space normally begins at 62 miles). It was launched from the NASA Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia and reached a top speed of Mach 4.04. The 16-foot-long rocket weighed 268 pounds gross and carried a 15-pound payload, including a telemetry system. Called Project Icarus, it was founded by Mike Stackpole along with other students in the Embry-Riddle Future Space Explorers and Developers Society. The students raised \$17,500 in funding and relied on support from other sources to get the project off the ground. For more information and a video of the

launch, see the [Web site](#).

### **HONDAJET TO PLACE ENGINE FACTORY SOON**

Just when you thought the big news about the location of the [HondaJet](#) factory was past (it will be in Greensboro, North Carolina), a competition has developed for the location of the engine plant. The Associated Press reports that it is by no means certain the plant will also be located in Greensboro, and other surrounding North Carolina counties are entering the competition, including officials from the Burlington-Alamance Regional Airport. Officials there are buying land for a project tentatively called "Big Wing," while officials in Greensboro are still negotiating with HondaJet.

### **GO WEIGHTLESS WITH ZERO-G**

Now you can train like the astronauts—for a few minutes. Zero Gravity Corporation, the company that provides FAA-approved commercial weightless flights, announced last week that Sharper Image Corporation will begin selling reservations for seats on Zero-G's public flights on May 15. The Zero-G Experience includes a brief training session and a 90-minute flight on *G-Force One*. During parabolic maneuvers, passengers can experience Martian gravity (one-third gravity), Lunar gravity (one-sixth gravity), and zero gravity. "The general public now has convenient access to an incredible adventure that was previously only available to a select few," said Dr. Peter H. Diamandis, CEO and co-founder of Zero-G. The company says the weightless flight encounter is the same as that used by NASA to train its astronauts and used to film *Apollo 13*. The likes of Buzz Aldrin and Burt Rutan have also flown on Zero-G. Flights regularly depart from Las Vegas and the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. You can reserve a seat online through [Sharper Image](#) or [Zero-G](#). A seat through Zero-G currently runs \$3,500 plus tax.

### **JOY OF FLIGHT: TAXIWAY CONFESSIONS**

Sometimes, the perfect ending to the perfect flight is an unexpected encounter on the ground. Read about a chance meeting at an airport with a veteran who was a crewmember on the Vought OS2U Kingfisher during World War II in "[Taxiway Confessions](#)," in the latest installment of the Joy of Flight. To submit a story about GA adventures, please [send us an e-mail](#). Past articles are [available online](#).

**CORRECTION:** In last week's edition of *ePilot* in the "Tuskegee Airmen honored with Congressional Gold Medal" article, we incorrectly stated which governor tried to bar the Little Rock Nine from school. It was former Arkansas Gov. Orval Faubus. We regret the error.

For daily news updates, see [AOPA Online](#).

## **Inside AOPA**

### **VOTE NOW FOR MARCH 'AOPA PILOT' PHOTO OF THE MONTH**

It's up to you! [Go online to vote](#) for your favorite from among the five best March entries chosen by the *AOPA Pilot* staff.

The winning photo will be announced in next week's *ePilot* and will be published on

AOPA Online and in an upcoming issue of *AOPA Pilot*. The *AOPA Pilot* 2007 General Aviation Photography Contest runs through September 4. Get a shot at it yourself and submit your photographs at [AOPA Online](#). Cash prizes totaling more than \$9,500 will be awarded, including a grand prize of \$1,000.



### **AOPA HITS NEW MEMBERSHIP RECORD**

At a crucial time for general aviation, AOPA has reached a new membership milestone: 411,187 members. This gives the association even more clout on Capitol Hill as we fight hefty fuel tax increases as well as new user fees on GA. "We draw our strength from members," said AOPA President Phil Boyer. "This new record shows that we're headed in the right direction." Since Boyer took the

helm of AOPA in 1991, membership has grown more than 33 percent.

### **PROJECT PILOT HELPS STUDENTS THROUGH TRAINING TRIALS**

Remember the occasional frustration you experienced as a student pilot—trying to nail your landings before your first solo or struggling to understand VOR navigation? Since you've experienced the trials of flight training, and succeeded, you can encourage student pilots as they work to overcome similar obstacles. And you can do so through [AOPA Project Pilot](#). For example, Dr. Curtis Williamson, an AOPA Project Pilot Mentor, helped Michael Shawn Dixon start flight training. He pointed Dixon to [AOPA's TurboMedical form](#) to help him get his medical and showed him the wealth of flight training resources available on AOPA Online. "During my training, there were many days that I was disappointed and wanted to quit. Dr. Williamson was always willing to offer encouragement and able to reassure me my frustrations were normal," Dixon wrote to AOPA. "I feel strongly [that] without his generosity, I would still be a frustrated student. Someday, I want to be a pilot mentor myself."

### **DEADLINE NEARS FOR 2007 KARANT AWARDS**

Applications for the prestigious [AOPA Karant Awards](#) are due soon. They must be postmarked by April 16, 2007. The awards honor reporters in the media for their fair, accurate, and insightful reporting on general aviation. Journalists may submit stories that ran between January 1, 2006, and December 31, 2006, in the following categories: print, TV or video, and radio. Each award carries an honorarium of \$1,000, and the winners will be recognized at a ceremony at [AOPA Expo](#). The awards are named for the late Max Karant, founder of *AOPA Pilot* magazine and the association's first senior vice president.

## **Expert Advice**

### **BIRDS CAN BE UNWANTED PASSENGERS**

Longer days and warmer temperatures prompt the avian mating instinct and subsequent desire to protect their nests. These tiny fliers—particularly starlings and sparrows—find the dark cavities and hidden nooks of small aircraft irresistible. Look carefully for signs of the nesters: Bird droppings or loose bunches of grass under the airplane are subtle clues. Use a flashlight to peer into tiny gaps in the airframe and small places under the cowling. Once you've discovered a nest, and removed it, the continuing challenge is to keep them from returning. Many pilots design custom plugs for openings or stuff rags into cavities. Just remember to remove them before flight! [Read more on spring preflights](#) from the AOPA Safety Foundation.

### **BUYERS BEWARE: READ FINE PRINT ON CAREER TRAINING DEALS**

Most ab initio career-training academies charge an all-inclusive price covering flight and ground training for all certificates and ratings in the program. Look carefully at these deals. A seemingly low package price may cover only the minimum instructional flight hours required in the regulations. Since most people take longer, you could end up spending considerably more. And be sure to allow for the cost of additional flight instructor fees and aircraft rental. Ask how mid-course increases in aircraft rental rates are handled. If the rate goes up, do you have to pay the difference? If you had to withdraw early for unforeseen reasons, how much of your unspent money would you get back? If the academy went out of business, are you guaranteed a refund? Usually not. How hard is it to withdraw money from your account for nonflying expenses such as housing? How does the school handle an extended leave of absence? Ask about your coverage on the school's aircraft insurance in the event of a mishap. Verify success stories, as well as information on the percentage of graduates that are hired. Consult with graduates, if possible, to determine how they feel about the value of their training. Make sure that you're getting the best quality training for your dollar.

## **AOPA Air Safety Foundation News**

### **DATALINK: YOUR LINK TO AVOIDING THUNDERSTORMS**

With warmer temperatures and the threat of convective activity this spring and

summer, many pilots will be relying on their in-cockpit weather resources to avoid thunderstorms. "Because of the availability of weather information in the cockpit, many pilots will be able to make flights they wouldn't have tried before—and complete them safely—but others might get themselves into trouble," said Bruce Landsberg, AOPA Air Safety Foundation executive director. "That's why we produced a free online minicourse about datalink." [Datalink](#) explains what datalink is and the type of information it can provide, like radar, textual weather, traffic, and more. It also discusses the benefits and limitations of datalink weather information and how to use the technology for a safer flight.

### GET WEATHERWISE

The AOPA Air Safety Foundation and FAA teamed up to recently send the foundation's *WeatherWise* CD to all instrument-rated pilots in the United States. Their goal: to get pilots ready for the major threat of the summer flying season—convective activity. The same information is available for free online for all pilots in the foundation's [WeatherWise: Thunderstorms and ATC](#) online and downloadable [companion Safety Advisor](#).

### Quiz Me

Here's a question asked by an AOPA member who contacted our aviation services staff through the AOPA Pilot Information Center. Test your knowledge.

**Question:** Is there an official FAA listing of aircraft type designators that are to be used when filing a flight plan?

**Answer:** Yes. The FAA's [Air Traffic Controller's Handbook](#) (7110.65N) outlines the various aircraft make/model designators. You must [list the proper designator](#) for the aircraft you fly when filing a flight plan so that ATC can properly identify and work you into the National Airspace System. In 1997, the FAA conformed to the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO's) [four-character designator standards](#).

Got a question for our aviation services staff? The AOPA Pilot Information Center is at your service. Call toll-free 800/872-2672 to speak to a specialist about any general aviation topic. Or e-mail to [pilotassist@aopa.org](mailto:pilotassist@aopa.org). Send comments on our Quiz Me! questions to [epilot@aopa.org](mailto:epilot@aopa.org).

### Picture Perfect

Looking for some really fabulous aviation photography? All the air-to-air photos and beautifully detailed ground images used by *AOPA Pilot* magazine over the years are yours at the click of a mouse button. Download your favorite images to use for wallpaper, send an e-postcard, or order prints online. For more details, see [AOPA Online](#).

### Catch-A-Cardinal Sweepstakes Update

#### THE BIRD GETS PRIMED FOR PAINT

Two of the most critical steps in the paint process are the priming and base-coat applications. Do these right—[like we are with your 1977 Cessna Cardinal](#) for this year's sweepstakes—and the finished product will last for years longer. You can see the results—with the interior of the airplane open for inspection—at the Sun 'n Fun Fly-In from April 17 through 23 in Lakeland, Florida. You'll also get your first chance to fly the airplane—with the intro version of our Catch-A-Cardinal aircraft module (for Microsoft Flight Simulator), created especially for us by [Flight1 Aviation Technologies](#).



### Weekend Weather

See the current weather on [AOPA Online](#), provided by Meteorlogix.

## AOPA Career Opportunities

Ever dream of turning your passion for aviation into a career? AOPA has some exciting opportunities. We're looking for a Director of Marketing, Non-dues Revenue Program Specialist, Aviation Regulatory and Certification Policy professional, Director of Development, Assistant Editor, and Aviation Technical Specialist. To learn more, visit [AOPA Online](#).

## ePilot Calendar

### UPCOMING FLYING DESTINATIONS:

**Lakeland, FL.** Sun 'n Fun takes place at Lakeland Linder (LAL), April 17 through 23. AOPA Day at Sun 'n Fun is April 20. Visit the [Web site](#).

To [submit an event](#) to the calendar or to [search all events](#) visit AOPA Online. For airport details, see [AOPA's Airport Directory Online](#).

### FLIGHT INSTRUCTOR REFRESHER CLINICS

The next AOPA Air Safety Foundation Flight Instructor Refresher Clinics are scheduled in Denver, Cincinnati, and Boston, April 14 and 15. Clinics are also scheduled in Tampa, FL; Chicago; Indianapolis; and Reston, VA, April 21 and 22. For a complete schedule, see [AOPA Online](#). Can't make it in person? Sign up for the [CFI Refresher Online](#).

### AOPA AIR SAFETY FOUNDATION SAFETY SEMINARS

AOPA Air Safety Foundation Safety Seminars are scheduled in Gaithersburg, MD, April 12; and Lumberton, NC, April 14. The topics vary—for details and a complete schedule, see [AOPA Online](#).

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