

NACA

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1,500-Hour Rule, Pilot Retirement Age Focus of Hearing

The House Aviation Subcommittee held a hearing April 19 on aviation workforce challenges, focusing on the pilot shortage. Full Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-Mo.), citing his experience as a pilot, maintained that the 1,500-hour rule should be modernized to allow more credit for flight simulator training. Several Republican members expressed support during the hearing both for allowing more credit for simulator training, and for increasing the mandatory retirement age from 65 to 67. No Democrats in attendance expressed support for either raising the mandatory retirement age or modifying the 1,500-hour rule. However, there was strong bipartisan support expressed for increasing federal financial aid for flight students and making flight education expenses from FAA-certified schools qualify for 529 savings plans.

NACA Meetings on FAA Reauthorization

Over the past two months, NACA has met with key Members of Congress and staff on our FAA reauthorization priorities, including the pilot shortage, non-safety-related regulations, aviation taxes and fees, NextGen funding and air traffic controller staffing. In light of the Supreme Court denying an appeal in the *Bernstein v. Virgin America* case, which effectively allows a California meal and rest break law to apply to airline flight crews, we've asked for language reaffirming that the FAA is the sole regulator of aviation safety, preempting additional state regulations.

Phil Washington Withdraws His Nomination, Nolen Announces Departure

Late last month, Denver International Airport CEO Phil Washington withdrew his nomination amid opposition from Republican senators, along with concerns from Senators Kyrsten Sinema (I-Ariz.) and Jon Tester (D-Mont.). Last week, Acting Administrator Billy Nolen, who has been in his post for about a year, announced that he plans to leave the agency this summer. With Nolen's resignation, we understand that Katie Thomson, current FAA chief of staff and former DOT General Counsel under President Obama, is a potential candidate.

U.S./EU Joint Committee

The U.S.-European Union Joint Committee will meet June 27-28 in Washington, D.C. We expect the Committee will resume its pre-Covid meeting cadence beginning this year. These meetings cover "doing business" issues associated with the U.S.-EU Open Skies agreement. Carriers experiencing issues with exercising their air service rights should reach out to us so that we may have them raised in the forum.

TSA Denies Cyber Amendment Reconsideration

Somewhat unsurprisingly, TSA has denied industry's petitions for reconsideration filed in response to their recent Cyber Emergency Amendment. We will continue to engage with TSA on various cyber issues and work to ensure industry viewpoints – including the transmission of sensitive information – are being incorporated into potential changes to cyber policy.

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1735 N. Lynn St., Suite 105, Arlington, VA 22209 USA.

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COVID Vaccine Directive Extended

Effective April 11, TSA has extended COVID-19 vaccine directives SD 1544-21-03C and EA 1546-21-02C, requiring non-citizens entering the United States to be vaccinated through May 11. The extension is in support of CDC's Order Implementing Presidential Proclamation on Safe Resumption of Global Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic.

New FAA-CAST Direction

At the April 6 CAST meeting, the co-chairs briefed CAST on a proposed process to challenge and update the processes of CAST and its working groups to help prepare, identify, and mitigate future safety risks. A new strategic group was formed to shape the vision of CAST going forward; Avelo's Michael Quiello – who previously held CAST co-chair positions and has a full understating of how CAST should restructure toward the future – will represent NACA members. Areas of discussion included using machine learning/AI to assist airline analysts in searching their data, and moving from MITRE to a new vendor that can help with the machine learning/AI process. Once the vision is created, the technical working group will determine how to incorporate the new vision into the sub-working groups and modify their charters.

New JIMDAT Structure

The Joint Implementation Measurement Data Analysis Team (JIMDAT), a CAST working group, meets three full days every month. The FAA recently replaced the government co-chair, and the industry co-chair retires in October and will be replaced. The new direction will be implemented by the new leadership in accordance with the CAST strategic plan. Serious questions have been raised about the time commitment required by JIMDAT and whether the in-person meetings can be modified to allow members more time in their regular job functions. JIMDAT also is reviewing how effective and timely its process is and whether it can be accelerated.

Fatigue Working Group

The Fatigue Working Group was launched in response to a JIMDAT study with Atlas' Chris Agnini as the industry co-chair. While the first meeting went well, with many airlines sharing fatigue practices, the group is officially on hold until certain structural matters can be corrected. The FAA co-chair position is currently vacant and one of the labor organizations is insisting on a tri-chair structure to include both labor and management representation. The fatigue charter clearly establishes a co-chair structure, but the CAST meeting minutes incorrectly reflect a decision to implement a tri-chair structure. This situation will be addressed and voted on at the June 1 CAST meeting hosted by NACA.

MAAC Meeting

The Military Aviation Advisory Committee (MAAC) met at ATSG headquarters in Wilmington, Ohio, on April 5. George Novak represented NACA at the meeting, which was chaired by General Michael Minihan and Randy Martinez. The MAAC received an unclassified intelligence briefing on the current threat atmosphere from Air Mobility Command representatives, as well as a briefing from the Indo-Pacific Ad Hoc Committee. Oliver Wyman also presented their research on the aviation mechanic shortage and possible approaches to alleviate the issue. NACA air carriers ATI, Atlas, National, Omni, and Western Global all attended.

Next NACA Board Meeting, June 8

After soliciting input and feedback from members on potential conflicts, the next NACA Board of Directors meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, June 8, at NACA Headquarters. The meeting will begin with a reception and dinner on Wednesday, June 7, from 6:00-9:00 PM. Further details will be sent as we finalize the agenda and outside speakers.