

NACA

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2023 FAA Reauthorization Developments

While the House has completed work on its five-year FAA reauthorization legislation, the Senate Commerce Committee has yet to mark up its version because of opposition from Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.). Leader Shumer objects to an amendment sponsored by Senators John Thune (R-S.D.) and Kyrsten Sinema (I-Ariz.), directing the FAA to create a new Restricted Air Transport pathway Enhanced Qualification Program in line with recommendations from a 2013 pilot training Aviation Rulemaking Committee which included ALPA. The programs would be offered by airlines at FAA-certified flight schools, must be approved by the FAA and would allow structured and simulator training to count toward the 1500-hour ATP threshold.

The recently enacted Continuing Resolution providing funding for government agencies through November 17, 2023, included an extension of FAA's operating authority through December 31, 2023. Given the suspension of legislative activity in the House pending election of a new Speaker, along with the expiration of government funding in just over a month, prospects for Senate action on a long-term FAA bill this year appear slim.

FAA Administrator Nominee Update

The Senate Commerce Committee plans to vote on the nomination of former FAA Deputy Administrator Mike Whitaker to be the next FAA Administrator on October 18. During his recent confirmation hearing, Whitaker stated that while he could not modify the 1,500-hour rule threshold without legislative action, recent advances in flight simulator training technology can enhance pilot training. He also stated that he looks forward to considering the recommendations of the Air Carrier Safety and Pilot Training Aviation Rulemaking Committee. We expect Whitaker to be confirmed by the full Senate within the next month.

PAC Update

In October, we will be participating in a fundraiser for Senator Sinema, who is committed to meaningful legislative solutions to address the pilot shortage. We also are trying to schedule a small event for House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chair Sam Graves (R-Mo.) – a critical ally on our FAA reauthorization priorities – on November 29, prior to our next board meeting in Washington.

Security Program Engagement

In a welcome development, we learned during our Security Council meeting October 11 that TSA will reverse their position on engagement with industry on the Aircraft Operator Standard Security Program re-write effort. After getting word this summer that TSA intended to use the standard notice and comment period for industry input, we raised the issue with Administrator Pecoske at our Board meeting. The Administrator agreed that meetings with TSA staff about policy changes tend to yield better results than the notice and comment system. We expect formal engagements on the first two sections of the AOSSP to start in the first quarter of 2024.

(next page)

NACA/RAA Security Council

NACA hosted the first joint Security Council meeting with the Regional Airline Association on October 11. The meeting featured strong attendance from the members of both associations, along with representatives from numerous departments of TSA, and a detailed presentation from TSA's Air Domain Intelligence and Analysis Cell (ADIAC). A meeting summary has been sent to the NACA Security Council detailing major discussion points, presentations, attendees, and action items. We expect to hold another joint meeting with RAA at some point in 2024.

NACA Cyber Security Council

NACA's Cyber Security Council met on October 10 and was well attended by CISOs and various security directors from our airlines. We received robust presentations from the FBI, CISA, FAA, and TSA. There have been significant regulatory actions related to cyber security over the last year, leading to serious discussion on numerous topics with TSA. A meeting summary along with the presentations will be sent to the Council shortly.

Commercial Aviation Safety Team (CAST)

CAST met on October 5 to discuss a wide variety of topics. ASIAs briefed new ways to speed up the data analysis process through Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence. The ASIAs executive board will meet October 25 to continue the new strategy. There was also a briefing on GPS anomalies over Iraq and Turkey; we've reached out to members that might have seen an impact. NASA presented a briefing on how Artificial Intelligence could help mine data to support the SMS process. Finally, the CAST SMS, Data/Metrics, Governance and Communications Tiger Teams gave updates on their progress, with further reports due at the next CAST meeting in December.

Infoshare

Infoshare will be held in Dallas December 12-14, in conjunction with the 119-leadership session. There was a discussion during the CAST meeting about reducing the Infoshare meetings to once a year to lessen the impact on FAA staff workload and budgets. NACA has reached out to our members to gauge their agreement with this proposal.

Investigative Technologies Aviation Rulemaking Committee (IN Tech ARC)

The IN Tech ARC met at the end of September to discuss the availability of new technologies to improve safety on aircraft. It was noted that even when new technologies are available, many operators choose not to install or activate these systems to maintain fleet standardization.

Pathway, Partnership and Pipeline ARC – (P3-ARC)

The P3 ARC met October 11-12 to prepare a presentation to the full Aviation Training Committee (ACT) ARC. No consensus has been reached on credit hours for simulator time. NACA considers this a key issue for this ARC to resolve. The P3 ARC is also looking at ways to extend financial aid to lower-income students and reach out to underrepresented groups.