

New caucus educates lawmakers on GA issues

By [Tom Norton](#) · May 5, 2009

A new congressional caucus to help ensure the future of general aviation, founded and co-chaired by Reps. Allen Boyd (D-Fla.) and Vernon Ehlers (R-Mich.), is picking up steam as members of Congress in key aviation-related committees add their names to the ranks of those supporting GA, according to a May 4 news release from the [Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association](#).

The General Aviation Caucus, formed to educate lawmakers about the importance of GA to our economy and transportation system, has 31 members so far, including House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar (D-Minn.), AOPA reported.

"When people understand the true value of general aviation, they want to protect it and help it grow," said AOPA President Craig Fuller. "This caucus will help draw attention to the issues affecting GA while giving lawmakers the opportunity to learn more about how GA benefits their constituents."

Boyd and Ehlers said their efforts to help their fellow members of Congress to understand all of the benefits GA provides will be strengthened by AOPA's GA Serves America campaign as they strive to protect the industry in the face of challenges.

"As a pilot, I have seen firsthand the critical role that general aviation plays in creating jobs and bolstering the local economy in rural communities across America," said Boyd. "This campaign is an important tool for raising public awareness of general aviation, and I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress to keep general aviation strong." AOPA worked with Ehlers and Boyd, who are AOPA members, and with other GA groups to establish the caucus. As legislative and regulatory challenges to GA mount, the caucus and [GA Serves America Campaign](#) will be valuable tools for educating policymakers and the public about the value of GA, AOPA stated.

"General aviation is an important part of our nation's transportation system and economy," Ehlers said. "This new caucus will highlight general aviation issues on the Hill, and I hope it will help my colleagues to recognize the great value of general aviation in each of their districts."

In a letter inviting members of Congress to join the caucus, Boyd and Ehlers pointed out that GA contributes more than \$150 billion to the U.S. economy each year and employs nearly 1.3 million workers. GA manufacturing exports make GA one of the few remaining U.S. industries with a positive foreign trade balance, they stated.

"There are more than 230,000 GA aircraft in the United States, which service nearly 19,000 small and regional airports, many more than the 500 commercial airports in the United States," they wrote. "These airports help connect people and industries that do not always have easy access to our commercial airports. In fact, more than 100 communities have lost commercial airline service this year, leaving GA as their only alternative."