

# How the U.S. Airline Industry Can Attract New Pilots and Serve Small and Rural Communities

The Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l remains fully committed to doing what it takes to keep the airline pilot supply strong, our skies safe, and provide reliable air service to rural America. We're eager to continue our work with Congress, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and our industry partners to achieve these goals. Here are policy actions that will advance the piloting profession and our airline industry.

## Policy actions that will inspire more people to become airline pilots:

### ▶▶ **Make it easier for U.S. military veterans to become airline pilots.**

By passing the American Aviator Act (S. 3322), Congress would authorize competitive grants that support flight-training services for veterans who aren't already military pilots. Introduced by Sen. Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Sen. John Hoeven (R-ND).

### ▶▶ **Encourage more women to become airline pilots.**

The Promoting Women in the Aviation Workforce Act (H.R. 4673/S. 2244) would direct the FAA to create and facilitate a Women in Aviation Advisory Board to promote organizations and programs that provide education, training, mentorship, outreach, and recruitment of women into the aviation industry. Introduced by Rep. Elizabeth Esty (D-CT) and Rep. Mimi Walters (R-CA) in the House and Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME) and Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) in the Senate.

### ▶▶ **Reform student loan programs to make it more affordable to become an airline pilot.**

Congress should enact H.R. 926, legislation that provides for student debt forgiveness for STEM majors, including aviation degrees.

Congress should also prioritize advancing legislation to increase the borrowing limits for both subsidized and unsubsidized loans for the federal student loan program to make pursuing ATP or R-ATP airline pilot certificates more feasible for students from all income levels.

Other federal resources should be made available to rationalize the cost of pilot training and federal loans for student pilots.

Student loan debt payback and relief programs could credit a percentage of the student loans used for flight training for every year that a pilot graduate works for an airline that serves smaller and rural communities under Federal Aviation Regulations Part 121.

ALPA maintains that air transportation to small and rural communities is a national priority. The United States needs to recognize the value that airports bring to small and rural communities and economies. While airlines provide service based on market demand, pro-aviation policy can help ensure that small and rural communities receive appropriate air service.

## Policy actions that will help rural and small communities receive air service:

### ▶▶ **Fully and predictably fund the current Essential Air Service (EAS) program in the near term.**

Congress should encourage the DOT secretary to review and enforce existing statutory requirements to improve the overall efficiency of the EAS program.

### ▶▶ **Direct the DOT to review the list of eligible EAS markets.**

The DOT should convene a separate working group to review the EAS markets and modify as necessary to guarantee air service to all U.S. state capitals beyond 90 miles of the nearest airport with scheduled service.

### ▶▶ **Fund the Small Community Air Service Development Program in its entirety.**

Federal lawmakers must restore the Small Community Air Service Development Program authorization to 2002 levels (\$20M) to provide it with regular and predictable funding.

### ▶▶ **Establish a permanent small community airline service framework that builds on the goals of the EAS program for the future.**

Congress should redesign the EAS program into a permanent, long-term, economically sustainable initiative that is based on and improves the current EAS effort to meet the needs of Americans who live in rural communities throughout all 50 states.

▶▶ **Ensure airports receive federal support to promote air travel.**

Programs are available for airports and local partners to promote airline travel from their small communities, and Congress can help ensure that they are broadly applied.

▶▶ **Ensuring an adequate supply of qualified airline pilots in the future.**

No one is more committed than ALPA to ensuring that the U.S. and global airline industries have an adequate supply of qualified, trained, and experienced airline pilots in the future.

- Every year, ALPA pilots attend events such as AirVenture at Oshkosh, the Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals Annual Convention, the National Gay Pilots Association Industry Expo, and the Women in Aviation International Conference.
- ALPA has also led the effort to launch, with others in the aviation industry, [aviationworks4u.org](http://aviationworks4u.org), a one-stop shop for exploring a career in aviation.
- ALPA has signed formal agreements with 11 universities to promote aviation careers through

professional development and mentoring programs.

- ALPA has established a scholarship program for students who are active in ACE Clubs and enrolled in aviation degree programs.
- During the 2017–18 academic year, ALPA pilots reached more than 15,500 elementary, middle, and high school students with information about the profession.

For more than 30 years, ALPA has been conducting the important work of inspiring the next generation of airline pilots, including during both the economic ups and downs of the U.S. airline industry. ALPA has steadfastly promoted the profession as the best job in the world and has at times been the sole voice in the industry doing so. This outreach to attract more individuals to consider a profession in aviation is working, but Congress and the U.S. airline industry can do more.

To learn more, visit [www.alpa.org](http://www.alpa.org) and find us on social media @WeAreALPA.

