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November 4, 2011

The Honorable President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Representing the interests of general aviation in Florida, the Florida Aviation Trades Association strongly opposes user fees for aircraft flights as proposed by the September 2011 Plan for Economic Growth and Deficit Reduction. Please allow me to explain our position.

Aviation in Florida is a \$114 billion industry employing many thousands of Americans. For instance because of our favorable climate and location Florida is an international hub for flight training, employing instructors to teach and supporting businesses all around that benefit from the presence of thousands of students that live here temporarily while they train. Also aircraft manufacturers Piper and Embraer both build aircraft in Florida supporting hundreds of precious manufacturing jobs that this country cannot afford to lose. Furthermore aviation services companies from repair stations to paint shops to specialist construction firms locate in Florida to take advantage of this successful but still struggling industry.

The proposed \$100 per flight user fee would have a detrimental impact to an aviation industry that has already been hit hard by the slow economy and a misinformed public perception. General aviation is responsible for countless activities that directly benefit the public good: Emergency medical and organ transplant, law enforcement activity, crop dusting, and news gathering just to name a few. Most of the companies providing and supporting these services are not major corporations but the small and medium sized businesses that drive America's economy; I know, my family owns one of them, and many of us are struggling to survive. The proposed fee could quite literally be the nail in the coffin of many of these highly stressed entities.

From a governmental standpoint the Florida Aviation Trades Association also has major concerns over the administrative burden that collecting this fee would create. Tracking the thousands and thousands of flights per day that originate or terminate in this country is an onerous task, not to mention the manpower that would be required to bill and collect the fee. An already stressed national budget does not benefit from a fee that costs so much to administrate.

In closing we believe that focusing on keeping aircraft flying and the aviation industry vibrant should be a goal of any economic growth plan. We don't believe that marginal deficit reduction with such a negative economic impact is in the best interests of the country.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandy Showalter", is written over a white background.

Sandy Showalter
President

cc. Florida's Congressional Delegation