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EAA STATEMENT ON WHITE HOUSE ATC PRIVATIZATION PROPOSAL

EAA AVIATION CENTER, OSHKOSH, Wisconsin — (March 16, 2017) — Statement from EAA CEO & Chairman Jack J. Pelton on White House ATC Privatization Proposal:

On Thursday, the Trump Administration released a budget proposal that confirms one of our greatest concerns regarding the future of U.S. general aviation: the potential separation of the FAA's Air Traffic Organization into an "independent, non-governmental organization." This proposal mirrors one introduced in Congress last year in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

EAA strongly opposed ATC privatization then, and we strongly oppose it now.

Removing ATC from FAA control and oversight would pose a significant risk to general aviation's long-term access to the National Airspace System (NAS). Under such a system, ATC would be overseen and managed by a board made up of commercial interests, with the nation's airlines having the most powerful and numerous voices. These interests would inevitably drown out whatever token representation and economic impact GA would have on such a board, creating an ATC system that would serve commercial interests with the greatest financial resources.

Proponents of such a system claim it will make our NAS more efficient, comparing the proposal to other privatized systems around the world. But the size and complexity of the U.S. NAS dwarfs those airspace systems, and in many of those systems general aviation has been stifled.

Additionally, proponents claim that the proposals from the White House and prior privatization efforts would save U.S. taxpayers millions of dollars, but fail to specify how that would be achieved when all existing labor and infrastructure costs would be transferred to a corporatized system. The truth is, these proposals do not address the underlying problem of a stable Congressional funding stream for ATC services and system modernization. A privatized system would inevitably rely on the flying public, including general aviation users, for its operations and capital investments, with resources flowing to the areas of greatest economic impact: air carrier hubs and urban facilities.

As such, ATC privatization would likely threaten funding for infrastructure improvements to rural airports such as towers, instrument landing facilities, and other safety-critical needs for general aviation. In fact, consistent with this shift in resources from rural needs to major air carrier commercial operations, the White House budget eliminates funding for the Essential Air Service program, which is designed to preserve commercial air service in rural areas.

Currently, the FAA, and by extension Congress, are the only unbiased arbiters ensuring fair access to the NAS to all of its users. Access today is on a first come, first served basis. The trend under the FAA's modernization programs has been toward a best equipped, best served model while still preserving access for general aviation operations that cannot meet new equipment mandates. Once responsibility for the air traffic system is taken out of the hands of the FAA and given to a corporate entity, the fair arbiter is lost and the organization that controls the nation's airspace becomes beholden solely to commercial and economic interests. Those stakeholders that are the best funded, best equipped, and/or carry the most passengers will likely be the best served in a privatized system. General aviation will lose over time to economically powerful interests whose primary goal is to obtain control over the system and its resources. They will seek to minimize their own direct operating costs by reducing or eliminating services that do not directly address their needs and/or by shifting cost burdens onto other users of the system.

We cannot stress enough the threat ATC privatization poses to our ability to enjoy recreational aviation as freely as we do today. The White House will be relying on Congress to draft this proposal into law under the upcoming FAA reauthorization legislative process intended to be completed by the end of September. EAA is already advocating on Capitol Hill on behalf of our members and general aviation as a whole to ensure any changes to the air traffic control system serve the needs of GA. When there is legislation on which to specifically provide comment, we will be calling upon our members to communicate with their Congressional representatives to make our collective voices heard.

About EAA

EAA embodies the spirit of aviation through the world's most engaged community of aviation enthusiasts. EAA's 200,000 members and 1,000 local chapters enjoy the fun and camaraderie of sharing their passion for flying, building and restoring recreational aircraft. For more information on EAA and its programs, call 800-JOIN-EAA (800-564-6322) or go to www.eaa.org. For continual news updates, connect with [www.twitter.com/EAA](https://twitter.com/EAA).