



Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission

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NEWS RELEASE

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Senate Appropriations Committee Approves Aviation-Related Bills

OKLAHOMA CITY – Two aviation-related bills have made it through another round at the state Capitol.

The Senate Appropriations Committee this week unanimously approved House Bill 2784, the Regional Business Airport Modernization Act, and House Bill 3098, the Aerospace Development Act of 2008.

Authored by Rep. Mike Jackson, R-Enid, and Sen. Jay Paul Gumm, D-Durant, HB 2784 authorizes the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission to award state grants to many of the state's regional business airports for the construction or renovation of terminals and hangars used for general aviation, including any pavement work associated with those projects. It also helps those airports acquire the necessary navigational aids that pilots need to land their aircraft safely, even in inclement weather.

HB 2784 now moves on to the full Senate for consideration.

“House Bill 2784 is extremely important to our state since much of the commerce that is conducted around our state goes through our regional business airports, the backbone of our state's air transportation system. The businesses that use those airports are also the same ones that create jobs in our local communities,” Gumm said.

“You might say that our local airports serve as welcome mats to business travelers, especially to those who may be looking to expand or relocate his or her company. So it's vital that we invest in this critical part of our state's infrastructure.”

HB 3098 by Rep. Gary Banz, R-Midwest City, and Sen. Cliff Aldridge, R-Midwest City, redirects the Oklahoma Aerospace Institute (OAI) and the Center for Aerospace Supplier Quality (CASQ) to the Aeronautics Commission. Both programs have been with the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology since state lawmakers created both entities in 2006.

The OAI helps support and foster the growth of the state's aviation and aerospace industry by partnering with the state's educational and research entities in order to build a skilled, credential work force for the future.

CASQ provides a resource for mainly small- and medium-sized companies in Oklahoma that want to effectively compete for the estimated \$5 billion worth of federal contracts awarded annually by the Department of Defense, especially from Tinker Air Force Base. But recent reports have shown that

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Oklahoma companies have only received an average of approximately 10%, or \$500 million, of that \$5 billion total, a figure that Sen. Aldridge finds unacceptable.

“Many more Oklahoma companies should be getting more of those federal dollars, especially since Oklahoma is recognized as one of the seven centers in the world for the modification, repair and overall of aircraft and TAFB is the DoD’s largest aircraft repair facility. An increase in DoD contracts in Oklahoma will create and retain more high-wage, high-skilled jobs in the state,” Aldridge said.

HB 3098 will next be heard on the Senate floor.

Aeronautics Commissioner Director Bird said, “This week’s action by the Senate Appropriations Committee is excellent news for Oklahoma’s aviation and aerospace industry. Our lawmakers understand the role the industry plays in the state and that keeping it a viable and growing industry is indispensable if we expect our state to prosper well into the 21st century.”

Oklahoma’s aerospace and aviation industry yields an industrial output of \$12.5 billion annually for the state and is one of the state’s top employers, resulting in more than 150,000 direct and indirect jobs around the state and an annual payroll of \$5 billion. One in 10 Oklahomans derive their income from the aerospace and aviation industry. The average salary of an employee in the aerospace industry is \$54,719 compared to \$29,000 for the average Oklahoman.

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The mission of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission is to promote aviation, which includes fostering the growth of the aerospace industry and ensuring that the needs of commerce and communities across the state are met by the state’s 114 public airports that comprise the Oklahoma Airport System.