



Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission

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NEWS RELEASE

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Bill to Modernize State's Regional Airports Passes Senate Floor

OKLAHOMA CITY – Legislation that will help provide vital infrastructure improvements at many of the state's regional business airports is one step closer to Gov. Brad Henry's desk.

By a unanimous vote of 48-0, the state Senate today approved HB 2784, the Regional Business Airport Modernization Act.

Authored by Sen. Jay Paul Gumm, D-Durant, and Rep. Mike Jackson, R-Enid, 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.

"Our regional airports have such a significant economic impact on our communities and state," Gumm said. "The businesses that create jobs in those communities use these airports to transact commerce across the state and nation, and even the world. It is extremely critical to our economy to keep these airports up-to-date so that we can compete with other states in the region for those companies that are looking to expand or relocate to Oklahoma."

Jackson stated, "I am thrilled that House Bill 2784 has received so much support from both the House and Senate. Many of our regional airports are in desperate need for new terminals and hangars, many of which are extremely old and don't adequately meet the needs of the business customer. Oklahoma should absolutely never lose a business to another state because of inadequate airports."

Victor Bird, director of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission, said that many businesses across the state that use the state's 49 regional business airports have cited convenient access to the airport as a major reason why they located or expanded their business in those communities.

"Businesses want to fly their aircraft directly to the town or city where their business or company is located. They don't want to fly into a major airport and then rent a car and drive a couple of hours to their destination. Flying directly from point A to point B is much more efficient," Bird said.

Bird noted that Oklahoma is blessed with 114 public airports, which puts the state at #4 in the nation per capita. Almost 92 percent of Oklahoma's population is within 25 miles of a jet-capable runway, he said.

HB 2784 will next go to conference where legislative leaders from both chambers will iron out any differences and hopefully emerge with a final bill.

Oklahoma's aviation and aerospace 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 industry. The average salary of an Oklahoman employed in aerospace is \$54,719 compared to about \$30,000 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.