



Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission

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NEWS RELEASE

Special for the Duncan Banner

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Bird Brings ‘Airvangelism’ Message to Duncan Rotary

OKLAHOMA CITY – Victor Bird, director of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission, will be the guest speaker during the Duncan Rotary Club meeting scheduled for noon Wednesday, Nov. 14, at the Simmons Center, 800 Chisholm Trail Parkway.

Bird, who has directed the Commission for nearly four years, will share his strong belief in “airvangelism” with those in attendance and discuss the importance of general aviation airports to Oklahoma’s communities, including Duncan’s Halliburton Field. In particular, he will address the link between aviation and economic development.

Bird will also present a brief overview of aviation- and aerospace-related legislation that may be heard at the state Capitol in 2008, including the Engineer Workforce Bill (House Bill 2085) and the Airport Modernization Bill (House Bill 2082). Those bills overwhelmingly passed the House and Senate during the 2007 legislative session but never made it out of conference committee. Oklahoma aviation and aerospace leaders are hopeful that the bills will be passed and signed by Gov. Brad Henry in 2008.

HB 2085 would provide tax credits to engineering graduates who choose to work for an Oklahoma aerospace company. The aerospace companies would also receive a tax credit for hiring those graduates.

HB 2082 would provide \$30 million in one-time state funding to several of Oklahoma’s 49 business regional airports for specific airport-improvement projects, including the construction or renovation of terminals and hangars primarily used for general aviation.

“Airports are ‘Gateways to the World’ for communities and are extremely important in helping generate economic activity around our state,” Bird said. “The businesses that fly in and out of our communities cite convenient access to a general aviation airport as one of the key reasons for either relocating or expanding to a particular community. And those are the same businesses that create jobs and invest in our communities.”

Bird said that aerospace industry is one of Oklahoma’s largest industries, employing approximately 150,000 Oklahomans across the state and generating an annual payroll of \$ 5 billion. One in 10 Oklahomans derive their incomes from the industry, yielding an economic output of \$12.5 billion annually.

“Those are good jobs, the kind we must keep in our state. The kind that keeps our best and brightest here and attracts other talented individuals from outside the state,” said Bird noting that the average salary for an Oklahoman employed in the aerospace industry is nearly \$55,000, while the state average is approximately \$29,000.

An attorney and veteran of state government, Bird served Oklahoma State University's Board of Regents for five years, the Lieutenant Governor's office for one year and the Attorney General's office for nearly 12 years. Bird spent his last four years with the Attorney General's office as chief deputy attorney general of the Civil Division, supervising more than 50 assistant attorneys general. He was also the driving force for the enactment of the Oklahoma Antitrust Reform Act in 1998 – the first significant revision to Oklahoma's antitrust law since statehood – and for the formation of Governor Brad Henry's 2004 Aerospace Task Force.

Bird currently serves as treasurer on the executive committee of the National Association of State Aviation Officials (NASAO) and is an active member of the Governor's Council for Workforce and Economic Development.

Bird earned his juris doctorate and bachelor's degree from The University of Tulsa.

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