



Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission

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NEWS RELEASE

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Aeronautics Commission Outlines 2008 Legislative Agenda

OKLAHOMA CITY – Citing last fall's interim study by the Oklahoma House of Representatives that confirmed just how important both the aerospace industry and the state's air transportation system are to the state's economy, Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission Director Victor Bird has outlined the agency's 2008 legislative agenda. The agenda will feature:

- HB 2085, the Engineer Workforce Bill for the aerospace industry
- HB 2082, the Airport Modernization Bill
- Establishing an aerospace facilities fund
- Funding the Oklahoma Aerospace Institute, including the Center for Aerospace Supplier Quality (CASQ) and the Center of Excellence for Aerospace Technology (COEAT)

Bird stated that HB 2085 and HB 2082 are pending in conference committee this session after both bills failed to make it out of conference committee last year, despite being passed overwhelmingly by both the House and Senate.

HB 2085 would provide tuition rebates, tax credits to both Oklahoma aerospace companies that hire engineering graduates and engineering graduates who choose to work for an Oklahoma aerospace company, and tax credits to Oklahoma aerospace companies for the compensation paid to qualifying interns. HB 2082 would provide \$30 million for the Regional Business airports in the Oklahoma Airport System. This funding would come from general appropriations or bond financing and be used for the renovation or construction of airport terminals and hangars used for general aviation, pavement work associated with those projects, and navigational aids so that aircraft can land even in inclement weather.

An omnibus bill for the aerospace industry and aviation authored by Rep. Mike Jackson, R-Enid, that would include HB 2085 and HB 2082, an aerospace facilities fund, and funding for CASQ and COEAT which comprise the Oklahoma Aerospace Institute, has been filed according to Bird.

CASQ is designed to help Oklahoma aerospace companies successfully compete for the billions of dollars worth of government contracts annually awarded at Tinker Air Force Base and other Department of Defense installations across the country. COEAT will use applied research and technology transfer to create more opportunity for innovation and job creation in the aerospace industry.

Bird said the most challenging issues facing many of Oklahoma's aerospace companies right now are finding enough skilled workers and having enough room to grow. He pointed to AAR Services in

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Oklahoma City as an example of a company that has been forced to turn down work recently due to the lack of skilled workers and inadequate facilities. NORDAM and Spirit AeroSystems in Tulsa and are just a few of the other aerospace companies around the state that are facing similar obstacles, he said.

“Lack of a skilled workforce and facilities threaten the viability and growth of our aerospace industry,” Bird reiterated. “HB 2085 addresses the workforce issue while the aerospace facilities fund addresses the growth issue. They both complement one another.”

Bird explained that the facilities fund funded by bond financing would make it possible for the State to enter into partnerships with local governments in order to build needed facilities so that aerospace companies could take advantage of opportunities for growth.

According to various economic reports, Oklahoma’s aerospace industry is one of the state’s largest employers, resulting in approximately 150,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs statewide. The industry yields an annual industrial output of \$12.5 billion and generates an annual payroll of \$5 billion.

One in 10 Oklahomans derive their income from the aviation and aerospace industry and the average salary for an employee in the industry is nearly \$55,000, compared to \$29,000 for the average Oklahoman. Oklahoma is also one of seven centers in the world for the modification, maintenance, repair and overhaul of aircraft.

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 114 public airports that comprise the state’s air transportation system.