

REMARKS BY JAMES B. BUSEY
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It's a pleasure to be with you today.

I'm going to start by repeating a message I've been communicating for over a year now. The message is that I want the AOPA and the FAA to work together, as partners, to strengthen general aviation in our country.

General aviation isn't the stepchild of American aviation. It's the foundation -- the primary training ground for the aviation professionals we're going to need in the years ahead.

Now this partnership of ours depends on good communications. We need a two-way flow of information. You folks need to know what we're doing -- and why. And we need to know your ideas and your problems.

I think good communications start at the top. In the FAA's case, that means with me. And that is why I am here today.

I believe it's important for me to get out of Washington to meet aviation people all over the country. I want to communicate directly with you folks. And I want you to tell me, directly, what's on your minds. I want you to have the opportunity to ask questions, face to face. And you'll have that opportunity in just a few minutes.

Of all the speeches I make, none are more enjoyable than when I'm talking to pilots. I think we pilots share a special bond, whether we fly a single seater or a 747. The technology may be different, but the challenge and the rewards are the same.

To me, pilots are a special breed -- not necessarily better than others, but certainly different. We share a kinship that can't be defined in words. It can only be experienced.

We're lucky, because we have the opportunity to experience a challenge that never grows old, that always renews itself with every flight.

I think most of us fly not because it's our profession, but because it's our passion. Surely, if flying were anything less, then many of you wouldn't be spending the kind of money it takes to keep a plane in the air.

So I'm happy to be with you today. As pilots, you are special people to me. And as members of the AOPA, you are part of one of our most important aviation organizations.

Of course, the AOPA is not the creation of a single man. But let me give credit where credit is due. And a lot is due to John Baker.

We know him well at the FAA, he was once one of us. We know how long and hard he has worked for general aviation. And we know that the stature of the AOPA today is in large part the result of his vigorous leadership.

For all of my associates at the FAA, John, let me say thank you for a job well done. We will miss you. We wish you the very best.

And to Phil Boyer, we say welcome. We look forward to working with you, Phil, to make sure that general aviation continues to be a strong foundation for the greatest aviation system in the world.

I know I can count on all of you folks to help us reach our common goals. In instance after instance, this great organization has been immensely helpful to the FAA.

I think of the help that John and his staff have given our Aviation System Capacity Task Force. I think of AOPA's participation in our seminars on airport capacity. I think of your strong support for our Loran program. And I think of all the hard work that AOPA people did in helping us focus on problems in the compliance and enforcement area.

Those are just a few examples of the strong partnership we are forging. But, make no mistake about it, I want our partnership to be even stronger in the years ahead.

If we want to maintain America's aviation strength -- as I know we all do -- then we have no choice but to keep general aviation healthy and strong.

And we can't do that if the FAA's in one corner and you're in another. We've got to work together. I need your help. You need my help. It's just that simple.

We've got to be talking to each other and listening to each other -- not just when we have problems, but before problems come up.

When I got this job, I used to say I felt like the working end of a roto-rooter. You know where you're headed -- but you're not sure what you're going to find -- or whether you'll like it very much.

I spent a lot of time listening to folks around the country. And quite frankly, I didn't like a lot of what I heard.

As I told your convention in Orlando last year, the message I got, loud and clear, was that there was a feeling among pilots that the FAA was focusing too much on punishing violators and not enough on helping pilots to fly more safely.

The perception was that we were more concerned with enforcing regulations than we were in working with pilots, that we were going too far in handing out severe punishments for minor offenses.

You may remember that I said I wanted to change that, but that I couldn't do anything until I got the facts. I promised to do a top-to-bottom review of our general aviation compliance and enforcement practices.

And I went on to say that "Once we get all the facts pulled together toward the end of the year, I can guarantee that you'll be seeing changes in the FAA's compliance and enforcement activities."

Today I want to bring you up to date and give you an interim report on what we've done. I'm going to tell you how I see it from my perspective. And later, in the question-and-answer session, I want you to tell me how you see it from your perspective.

First of all, we did pull the facts together. We held listening sessions all over the country, including one right at your convention last year. We listened to pilots, FBO people, and many others. And we came away with a pretty good fix on the problems.

Yes, we heard complaints. But we also got a lot of good ideas. Then we came up with 42 specific changes to make our compliance and enforcement actions more effective and acceptable.

These changes are not public relations puffery. They are far-reaching and fundamental.

The major overall thrust is to put greater emphasis on voluntary compliance. After all, voluntary compliance is the bedrock of aviation safety in our country. The willingness to cooperate, to follow the rules, is essential to safety.

But that willingness can be undermined by the wrong kind of enforcement by the FAA. We don't need an iron-fisted enforcement policy that alienates a lot of people. It's better to try to understand, to help, to counsel, to train, and to educate.

So we're changing the way we do business. We're more flexible and less dogmatic. We're moving away from an emphasis on mandatory penalties. They're not the best way to get voluntary compliance.

A better way is to use counseling, education, and remedial training. We're telling our inspectors to use more of their own discretion and judgment. I want them to consider mitigating factors. I want to encourage them to use training and other remedies where appropriate.

In addition, we're changing the enforcement "culture" within the FAA. Most all of our inspectors have now been through revised training seminars, where we're concentrating on better human relations and communication skills and greater flexibility in dealing with violations.

Now these changes in our policies do not mean that every one of our inspectors will now act like charm school graduates. As I said in the interview for the October AOPA PILOT, we probably have some people out there who would like to continue to use the big hammer. But we're going to convince them that's not the way we want it done.

I'm sure that most of our people would rather use counseling and remedial training whenever possible. And now they really have the go-ahead to do just that. They don't need to be officious. They can be less rigid -- and focus more on the steps that lead to lasting improvements in safety rather than on handing out punishments. They know that I am behind these reforms 110 percent.

So we've made a good initial response to the legitimate criticisms of the FAA's compliance and enforcement activities.

How's the program going?

Well, some good things have happened. Take remedial training for example.

As you know, I rescinded the mandatory 60-day suspension for TCA incursions. Now we're handling many of those cases with remedial training -- which I think is much more effective.

With a 60-day suspension, a pilot can get back in an airplane on the 61st day, probably knowing no more than he knew on the day he committed the violation. Chances are he's not a better pilot. And his attitude may be a lot worse.

But with remedial training -- which usually involves a trip to the center to watch traffic control, along with a ground session and an air session -- the pilot will understand what he did wrong and how to keep from doing it again.

So far, we've had about 150 remedial training programs. The reports I'm getting say it's been well-received by the pilots involved. They seem to have a better attitude toward the FAA, and they're now more able to comply voluntarily. Those are exactly the results I want.

Of course, remedial training means more work for our inspectors. It takes longer to counsel and train than it does to issue a penalty. But most of our inspectors would rather work that way.

So, our experience shows that we're on the right track.

As I said a moment ago, we want our inspectors to help create an atmosphere that is more conducive to voluntary cooperation, an atmosphere based on good communications and trust.

That's a big order. But, again, I think it's beginning to work.

Let me give you an example. It's called "Operation Fixed Wing," and it's a new idea developed by Dennis Caravella, one of our accident prevention specialists, and Michael Nowicki, the manager of our Flight Standards office in West Chicago.

Operation Fixed Wing offers pilots a voluntary fly-in aircraft inspection, on a non-adversarial basis, and a courtesy flight check that can't be failed. It's strictly voluntary, and there's no threat of enforcement action, even if violations are found. The program is not aimed at holding anyone's feet to the fire.

Now you're probably wondering what happens when they find a violation? Well, like I said, there are no penalties.

Fortunately, most of the things we've found have been inadvertent and many were fixed on the spot. As a matter of fact, we haven't found many problems. The compliance level has been high.

I can tell you that the pilots who have volunteered for Operation Fixed Wing in the Chicago area have been very happy with it.

I'm happy with it too, and I think you'll see it showing up in other parts of the country soon.

As I said earlier, we're making many changes, more than I can cover today.

However, I do want to mention a couple of important items that are not related to compliance and enforcement.

As I said, I want to improve communications between the FAA and general aviation pilots. We've done a lot -- but we need to do more. Later this year, for example, we're going to improve the way we distribute NOTAMs.

We're also developing a new system that will make it easier for you to do your flight planning. We call it the Pilot Information Center, and I hope you'll stop by and see the prototype we have here in the exhibit hall. We'd welcome your comments and suggestions.

Many of you want to know how soon we'll complete the continental Loran system. I'm happy to say that both mid-continent Loran chains will be in operation by the end of April next year. And we're scheduled to complete the Loran signal-monitoring system early in 1992.

We're going to certify seven Loran instrument approaches next month, and after the monitoring system is up and running, we'll be certifying a lot more.

From what I'm hearing at places like Sun 'N Fun and Oshkosh, it seems that the perception of the FAA is beginning to change for the better.

We're moving slowly, but it's in the right direction. We need to institutionalize the changes we've made, get them deeply down into the organizational culture. And we need to get greater public acceptance and understanding.

I realize that you general aviation folks have a wait and see attitude. It's as if you're all from Missouri, the "show me" state. You've gotta be shown. Well, that's fine, because that's exactly what I want to do.

I know you're looking to us for positive results. We're not there yet. But we've made a good start. With your help, we'll go even further.

The AOPA worked long and hard to help us change our compliance and enforcement activities. You were there with us every step of the way. Stay with us now, and together we'll finish the job.

Thank you.