

Illinois Congressman Champions General Aviation



When U.S Representative Jerry Costello (D-12-IL) first entered public service in Illinois, his highest priority was to boost the local economy by building a new transportation network for the region.

This commitment soon led him to champion general aviation (GA) – a commitment he carried to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1988. Costello strongly believes that a strong transportation system is critical to economic growth, and that general aviation is an invaluable component of that system. As chairman of the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee’s Aviation Subcommittee, he has fought for modernization of the aviation system.

Q: General aviation plays a significant role in Illinois, correct?

A: Yes, and as a representative from Illinois, I have seen first-hand the critical role general aviation plays in creating jobs and bolstering local economies, especially in rural communities. GA contributes billions of dollars each year to Illinois’ economy, and the more than 100 community airports in Illinois support over 4,000 jobs. Many parts of the state, including areas in my congressional district, are without airline service, so there is a high level of reliance on general aviation to ensure that businesses of all sizes can reach the rest of the state and the nation.

Q: Last year, you were one of the first members to join the House General Aviation Caucus. What led you to take on that leadership role?

A: I recognize the value general aviation brings to the people of my district, and I wanted to ensure that my colleagues had an awareness of what general aviation brings to our nation’s economy. I’m pleased that less than a year later, our caucus has over 100 members.

Q: Is it true that you’ve been a long-standing supporter of system modernization?

A: That’s correct. Even before I became chairman of the House Aviation Subcommittee, I have long talked about the importance of investments in transportation, and how those investments are critical to spurring job creation and economic growth. Modernization of the aviation system is an ideal example of how investment can bring economic opportunity, while helping the U.S. to continue its role as the global aviation leader.

Q: You have repeatedly opposed general aviation user fees to support modernization funding. Why have you spoken out on this issue?

A: I’ve said it before: User fees for general aviation are a non-starter. They would carry all sorts of hidden administrative costs for operators. The large bureaucracy for collecting the fees would be expensive, and it would be an inefficient use of funding that should be going toward making the system safer and more efficient. ✦

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