

Ernest P. Salmon  
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Honorable Dianne Feinstein  
U.S. Senate  
331 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510

Re: Plea to reject user fee provisions in S. 1300 "Aviation Investment and Modernization Act of 2007"

Dear Senator Feinstein:

A debate will soon be taking place in Congress on the subject of user fees on aviation. I humbly submit to you that this debate is, in fact, about the future of general aviation in this wonderful country. I ask you in the strongest possible terms to reject the terms calling for user fees contained in S. 1300 "Aviation and Modernization Act of 2007" and to support efforts to remove user fee provisions from this bill.

I am an instrument rated private pilot. I worked for many years as a Northrop Grumman executive, and when I retired a few years ago, my wife and I decided to make the sacrifices in our lifestyle to own and enjoy a private airplane. We are now the proud owners of a little single engine Cessna airplane which I keep in a rented County hangar at the beautiful Camarillo airport. I am also president of the 250 member EAA Chapter 723 organization of pilots at the airport.

I am told by airport management that the Camarillo Airport generates over 500 jobs and \$55 million in taxable revenue for the local economy. The August 22-27, 2007 edition of Business Week included an article entitled "Home Is Where the Airport Is". To quote "...proximity to the airport has become a good thing, turning on its head traditional biases against the noise, pollution, and traffic airports produce." As a practical matter, my wife and I can launch our little Cessna from Camarillo and have about 20,000 destination airports to choose from in the United States. We have left from Camarillo and had lunch on the rim of the Grand Canyon, arriving relaxed and comfortable. Flying by airline limits us to about 300 U.S. destinations, not to mention the time spent wandering around in security lines at LAX without our shoes trying to explain why we forgot to put the sunscreen in a plastic bag. Major local employers such as Amgen recognize the business advantage of this general aviation flexibility and choose to operate their general aviation fleets from Camarillo. General Aviation is a vibrant and exciting part of this community and will have more to offer in the future as new technologies such as very light jets mature.

To contrast this dynamic view of General Aviation, just look at Europe. General Aviation has been crushed by user fees. User fees require a large and expensive bureaucracy to implement. Once such a bureaucracy is in place, it will take on a life of

its own and work diligently to justify its own existence. (At Northrop Grumman we called them self eating watermelons and worked very hard to crush such ideas before they took root.) For a more recent example, just look to our fine neighbors to the North. Canada implemented user fees with a flat rate to general aviation pilots just a few years ago. They are now charging for many transactions, and a pilot flying in Canada will get a bill several weeks afterward for the services used on any flight. Such a user fee bureaucracy ultimately causes economic displacements which are outside the purview of our lawmakers. Just try to find a sister general aviation airport in Europe making the economic contributions that Camarillo is to the U.S. economy. It does not exist.

There has been much press devoted to the need to revise the funding system for the FAA in order to implement needed upgrades to our infrastructure. However, I urge you to review recent studies by the Office of Management and Budget and the General Accounting Office. These studies do not support this contention. They project that the Airports and Airways Trust Fund revenues are at a record level and are projected to increase at a rate of approximately 6% annually for the next five years. Conversely, the user fee proposal contained in S 1300 would generate nearly \$1 billion LESS revenue (after paying for the new bureaucracy) between 2008 and 2012 than would be raised under the current system. All this while starting down the road of economic distortions outside the control of our elected representatives.

Please take the time from your busy schedule to weigh in on this issue for what it truly is – the preservation of a vibrant part of the American economy. Aviation user fees are a bad idea, and they should be struck from S. 1300.

Sincerely,

Ernest P. Salmon