



January 31, 2012

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives:

On behalf of general aviation airports across the country and members of the General Aviation Airport Coalition, I am writing to express serious concern about two potential threats to general aviation in the President's Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Proposal: instituting a "user fee" tax and eliminating the Federal Contract Tower program at general aviation airports.

A \$100 per flight fee on aircraft that use controlled airspace would decimate the general aviation industry, placing an unfair tax burden on aeronautical and other businesses that use or depend on general aviation. While commercial operators have the option to pass additional cost on to their customers; general aviation has no such option. General aviation alone has an annual economic impact of \$150 billion and is responsible for some 1.2 million jobs. It allows the transport of products and equipment that may be too large or too sensitive for transport in an airliner's overhead bin or cargo hold. General/business aviation allows American and foreign businesses direct access to more than 5,500 public use, business-class airports and can serve more than 18,000 landing areas in the United States alone. Commercial airliners serve 400-425 airports.

A second issue that must be considered is the administrative function of collecting the tax. The cost to collect fees has not been addressed, but will certainly reduce the projected revenue from the user fee; not to mention the considerable time it will take to become operational and the additional layer of federal bureaucracy at a time when the American people are calling for government downsizing.

Additionally, the proposed Budget may request that FAA eliminate funding to all FAA contract towers served exclusively by general aviation. This proposal has both safety and economic implications. Eliminating this critical program will affect at least half of the country's 248 FAA contract towers. By all measures, the FAA contract tower program has been one of the most cost-effective aviation safety programs at FAA for the past three decades. In this time of economic distress, local governments and other airport sponsors are not be able to absorb the cost of keeping these towers fully functional, which would have a devastating impact on air traffic safety at GA airports currently benefiting from the contract tower program.

Please join GAAC in opposition to these two threats to the GA community. Now is not the time to be taxing our nation's vital economic engines and cutting funding for the most efficient and cost-effective federal programs available to aviation.

Respectfully,

Richard K. Lewis
Chairman, General Aviation Airport Coalition
Concord Regional Airport Director