House Expected to Pass 20th Short-Term Extension of FAA Reauthorization Legislation

Today, the U.S. House of Representatives is scheduled to approve the twentieth short-term extension that will give lawmakers until July 22, 2011 to complete action on a long-term FAA reauthorization bill. The extension will allow FAA programs to continue while conference negotiations proceed on a final version of the legislation. The House of Representatives approved their bill H.R. 658, the FAA Reauthorization and Reform Act of 2011 on April 1, 2011 and the Senate passed their bill, S. 223, the Air Transportation Modernization and Safety Improvement Act on February 17, 2011.

Aviation and Maritime Subcommittees Hold Hearing to Discuss Potential Interference with GPS

On Thursday, June 23, members of the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Aviation, chaired by Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI), and the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, chaired by Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), gathered to hear testimony from government agencies and industry stakeholders regarding the effects on the implementation of LightSquared broadband internet on the Global Positioning System (GPS). Recent studies have shown that LightSquared’s broadband service is incompatible with GPS signals and could be detrimental to aviation and maritime safety.

Chairman Petri stated his concern over the potential decrease in aviation safety, arguing that it is important that the government does not do anything to limit NextGen efforts. “New burdens on the aviation industry as a result of FCC approvals would likely stifle NextGen efforts,” and that new and costly burdens on the community are unacceptable. Chairman LoBiondo agreed, stating that further testing is necessary “to ensure that implementation will not affect the safety and security of our nation.”

To view a list of witnesses and to watch a video recording of the hearing, click here.

Committee Heats Testimony on Small Businesses Competing with the Federal Government

The U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Small Business, Subcommittee on Contracting and the Workforce held a hearing titled “Insourcing Gone Awry: Outsourcing Small Business Jobs”. The committee heard from small business owners that have had contracts with the federal government that were lost to federal agencies because they decided to perform the work they were contracting internally. The small businesses argued that the total cost of federal agencies insourcing their work is more costly. Also testifying before the subcommittee was the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO, which argued that certain functions by the federal government to perform contracting activities internally were saving federal taxpayer money and jobs. Currently, there is no statutory or regulatory definition of insourcing, which is the conversion of work performed by private sector contractors to work performed by public sector employees through the hiring of additional public sector employees. It is understood that not all functions of government need to be carried out by federal employees and that contractors provide some goods and services. Congress and the President have always questioned when should work be performed by federal employees and when should it be performed by a contractor. However, most would agree that “inherently governmental” functions should be performed by federal employees, but unfortunately, there isn’t a clear definition of this term. According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the federal government could achieve a cost savings of up to 30% if public-private cost comparisons on commercial activities are routinely performed. The small business committee has committed to develop policies and procedures that protect taxpayer interests, increase efficiencies, and promote small business job creation.
NATA Joins Letter to Appropriations Chairman Supporting Competition Relative to Commercial Activities within the Federal Government

NATA has been working to foster support for current legislation that addresses unfair competition between private-sector businesses and the federal government, H.R. 1474/S. 785, the Freedom from Government Competition Act. Just this week, the association joined a letter to House Appropriations Chairman Harold Rogers (R-KY) requesting that language to limit OMB Circular A-76 competitions, or federal policy for the competition of commercial activities, be removed from any appropriations bills that pass the House in the coming months. In June, both the Fiscal Year 2012 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act and the Fiscal Year 2012 Department of Agriculture Appropriations Act passed with amendments offered by Representative Pete Sessions (R-TX) to remove the limitation on competition of commercial activities. There are 10 remaining appropriations bills that Congress must pass before the end of the fiscal year, September 30, 2011.

Next Week on Capitol Hill...

The U.S. Senate will be in session and the U.S. House of Representatives will in their districts for constituent work week.