

Flight Education Access Act

U.S. Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Dan Sullivan (R-AK)

The Flight Education Access Act would provide additional education aid for prospective students who wish to enter school to become a pilot. The upfront costs associated with pilot training are substantial, leaving the profession out of reach for many. This legislation would create critical tools to improve the accessibility of the piloting profession while also supporting a pipeline for highly qualified pilots in the aviation workforce.

Airline pilots are vital to the transportation industry – and high quality, FAA-regulated training is necessary for would-be-pilots to join the profession. To attract more people into the pilot profession, including people from populations historically underrepresented in the industry, students need access to enough federal financial aid to cover the average cost of in-state tuition for a flight education and training program. According to the University Aviation Association, flight training typically adds approximately \$80,000 in costs to the tuition and fees associated with a four-year degree. Current federal loan limits and other financial aid do not accommodate the full cost of pilot training, limiting access to pilot school for students who cannot afford to pay out of pocket or are unable or unwilling to take out high-cost, private loans. The Flight Education Access Act would fix this problem by expanding access to scholarships and loans to offset the cost of FAA-regulated Part 141 pilot training.

Supporting Organizations: Regional Airline Association (RAA), Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), Airlines for America (A4A), Southwest Airlines Pilots Association (SWAPA), National Air Carrier Association (NACA), University Aviation Association (UAA)

Reflecting the Real Cost of Pilot Education

The bill amends Section 428H of the Higher Education Act (HEA) to increase maximum limits on annual and aggregate amounts of Federal unsubsidized and subsidized student loans for students pursuing certificate, associate degree, or bachelor degree flight education and training programs at eligible institutions. To ensure that these additional loans are used for high quality education that leads to good paying careers in the profession, the Flight Education Access Act requires institutions receiving funding from these higher-limit loan to achieve a 70% completion rate within their flight education and training programs. This requirement will ensure programs are prioritizing the success of their students and giving them a clear pathway to gainful employment as a pilot.

Partnering to Support the Profession

The bill also creates opportunities for the airline industry, pilot unions, and institutions of higher education to partner together to advance the piloting profession and offset the cost of pilot school through scholarship programs. These pilot pipeline public-private partnerships will support the education of future pilots and create pathways to a more diverse pilot workforce. The program includes a 4 to 1 match to offset the cost of workforce partnerships that support the education of future airline and commercial pilots, work to diversify the pilot workforce to increase the number and percentage of pilots from underrepresented or non-traditional populations, and generate interest and support for a career as an airline and commercial pilot. By investing in the profession, these partners will help make a rewarding career more accessible to all.