



June 4, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leaders McConnell, McCarthy and Schumer:

On behalf of businesses, farms, and agricultural and rural organizations around the country, thank you for your significant efforts to pass the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), which is providing relief to small businesses, farms, and rural communities that depend on general aviation. Through provisions such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), many employers are receiving relief that allows them to retain employees, and we applaud

your work to inject additional funds into that program. Even with the added funds, some businesses are still struggling to access the PPP, and we appreciate your continued attention to this matter.

However, the general aviation industry, which includes all operations outside of commercial and military aviation, needs additional relief. Across the country, there are more than 5,000 public-use airports. Commercial airline service only goes to a fraction of these communities, so for farms and businesses in these places, local airports and general aviation are the only access to reach plants and jobsites in remote areas of the country; they support power line maintenance, sustain our food supply, and help these farms survey and monitor crops and farmland. In fact, each year, the agricultural aviation industry treats 127 million acres of cropland. And, general aviation across the country supports \$247 billion in economic impact annually and 1.2 million American jobs.

As Congress considers a fourth relief package, we respectfully request that fuel taxes paid by non-commercial operators also be suspended. This temporary suspension of taxes is similar to what the commercial airlines received and will assist thousands of small businesses, farms, and communities that depend on general aviation.

General aviation and local airports are not only a key economic driver, but they provide communities with critical services, including law enforcement, fire fighting, emergency and non-emergency medical transportation, and search and rescue operations. Most recently, volunteer pilots are using their own aircraft to deliver test kits to labs in Georgia, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Students at aeronautical universities are fabricating masks and shields to support our frontline nurses and doctors.

The businesses, farms and rural communities that depend on this form of transportation have been severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. General aviation operations are down by more than 70% across the nation, and some smaller airports facing traffic declines of up to 95%. Over a thousand rural communities have already been affected by this crisis, and this is exacerbated by the fact that over 11 million Americans live in a county that does not have a hospital, and an additional 18 million live in a county with no intensive care unit.

According to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), in non-metro counties, coronavirus cases increased by 125%, and coronavirus deaths increased 169% between April 13 and April 27, while metro counties saw a 68% increase in cases. Nearly 5,000 workers at meat and poultry packing facilities across 19 states have tested positive for COVID-19. In one county in Iowa, 90% of the more than 1,300 cases can be traced to the local pork processing facility. Air medical services, which are vital for transporting patients and providing emergency services to those in rural areas, have seen up to a 40% reduction in air medical transportation due to this crisis.

As we attempt to revitalize our economy, we need to give our small businesses, entrepreneurs, farmers, and communities every tool available to succeed, and connectivity will ultimately be critical to this effort. This relief will help ensure that businesses and communities across the country retain access to this vital form of transportation at a critical time for our country.

Sincerely,

National Agricultural Aviation Association

Maryland Farm Bureau

Arizona Farm Bureau

Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers

California Farm Bureau Federation

New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau

Michigan Chamber of Commerce

National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health

Ohio Forestry Association, Inc.

Main Street Project

Georgia Farm Bureau

The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry

California Fresh Fruit Association

South Dakota Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Oregon State Chamber of Commerce

USA Rice