



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE *111th* CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

House of Representatives

Supporting the Goals and Ideals of National Aerospace Day House Concurrent Resolution 167

Remarks Submitted by
Hon. Vernon J. Ehlers
of Michigan
In the House of Representatives
Wednesday, September 9, 2009

Mr. Speaker, as the author of this resolution and as a co-Chair of the House Aerospace Caucus, along with co-Chair Congressman *Norm Dicks*, I rise in strong support of House Concurrent Resolution 167, which supports the goals and ideals of creating a National Aerospace Day, in addition to recognizing the contributions of the aerospace industry to the history, economy, security and the educational system of the United States. I thank the gentleman from New York and the gentleman from Texas for their detailed recital of the many successes that the American aerospace industry has had, and I will not repeat those.

But as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Apollo Moon landing this year, it is appropriate that we pass this resolution recognizing the important achievements made possible by the aerospace industry. In addition to landing on the Moon, some other noteworthy achievements include leading the International Space Station project, innovative developments in meteorological forecasting, national defense, communications, and creating the Global Positioning System which has come to be used by consumers throughout the world in guiding them where they travel in their daily lives.

The United States also maintains the largest, most complex and safest aviation system in the world, comprised of more than 230,000 general aviation aircraft which use nearly 19,000 small and regional airports throughout our Nation, and more than 7,000 commercial passenger and cargo airline aircraft which utilize over 500 commercial airports. Our aviation system, especially business aviation, allows U.S. companies to stay competitive because our workers can be more productive and more efficient.

The United States aerospace industry is a powerful, reliable source of employment, innovation and export income, employing more than 840,000 people in the United States and supporting more than 2 million jobs in related fields. Although unemployment remains high, especially in my home State of Michigan, these high-value, good-paying jobs continue to be available because of the shortage of qualified workers in this field.

Therefore, in order for the United States to remain at the forefront of aerospace development, we must do a better job of educating our children in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, commonly referred to as STEM education. Flying and space exploration remain a powerful inspiration that captures the interest of young people, and I applaud the efforts by the aerospace community to get involved with children and schools to nurture this interest and improve our STEM education programs.

I am proud to report that in my hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, a young gentleman, Patrick Johnson, who is a pilot, has formed the West Michigan Flight Academy, and been teaching aviation to children in the elementary schools, particularly those who are lagging behind. He has been helping them build model airplanes and fly them. Just about a month ago, I was with him when we went to a local meeting of the Experimental Aircraft Association chapter in my community.

Many of these children went up in an airplane for the first time in their life. They got to stand by the airplanes and hear an explanation of what the different parts of the airplanes were and how they work. And, believe it or not, most of those children are now very interested in studying math and science to better understand aviation, and may enter an occupation they had never thought of before. So aviation also has a very important educational impact, and I am pleased that the aerospace industry has helped schools and teachers learn more and teach more about aviation, and that has inspired children to study science and mathematics.

I hope my colleagues will join me in honoring the aerospace industry for their good service by supporting the creation of a National Aerospace Day on September 16th. I also urge all members to vote for this concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 167.