

U.S. Rep. Grothman: Bipartisan Air America Act passes unanimously through Senate

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(Washington, D.C.) – Yesterday, the Senate unanimously passed the bipartisan [Air America Act](#), a bill introduced by Congressman Glenn Grothman (WI-06) and Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL). The bill now moves to the House for further consideration. The legislation is cosponsored by a bipartisan group of 228 Members of Congress and 33 Senators.

Grothman introduced the *Air America Act* on February 24, 2021. Both bills are identical and will correct an inequity suffered by the brave Americans who are former employees of Air America by ensuring they receive the federal retirement benefits and recognition they have earned.

This injustice toward Air Americans was brought to Grothman's attention by Air American and Oshkosh resident, [Neil Hansen](#), and the [Air America Association](#).

*"Congress has twice passed corrective legislation for other covert CIA-affiliated groups," **said Grothman.** "It is not right that they have chosen to ignore Air Americans for so long. These patriots risked their lives, many of them giving their life, fighting communism in the same way members of the Air Force did. I am honored that so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle are joining me to support these heroes.*

"Hopefully, today is the beginning of the end of Air Americans' long struggle to receive the recognition they deserve for their service to our country.

"I now strongly encourage House leadership to take up this overwhelmingly

bipartisan bill so we can ensure Air Americans — true American patriots — receive their earned recognition without further delay.”

Background Information on Air Americans

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Between 1950 and 1976, a group of approximately 1,000 U.S. citizens worked for Air America, which was portrayed as a private company carrying out flight operations during the Cold War. However, now-declassified documents have revealed that Air America was not a private company and, in fact, worked as a top-secret arm of the executive branch in implementing Cold War policies under the management of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) – meaning these brave Americans were federal employees under the law at the time they worked. Air Americans saved tens of thousands of lives in search and rescue missions for downed U.S. military pilots, evacuations of allied refugees, and the final evacuations of Danang and Saigon in 1975.

The *Air America Act* will ensure that those Air Americans who qualify for retirement benefits under the law will receive what they earned and deserve. Those who don't have the years of experience required for retirement benefits will nonetheless be honored, finally, with the recognition that their efforts were carried out on behalf of the U.S. government.

Air America employees have not been granted their retirement credit because of an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) rule change in 1985 that required government form SF-50/52 to prove federal employment status. While these patriots were, during their tenure working for Air America, legally defined as federal employees eligible for civil service retirement credit, the covert nature of their work resulted in a narrative that they were employees of a private entity. Moreover, for obvious reasons of secrecy in a clandestine operation, our government did not hire Air Americans using standard government forms. The unusual and unjust retroactive application of the amended regulation requiring form SF-50/52 in 1985 should never have been applied to Air Americans whose employing U.S. government entity, Air America, was dissolved in 1976.