

U.S. Sens. Baldwin, Sullivan: Lead bipartisan bill to train more commercial pilots, bolster pilot supply

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Senators Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Dan Sullivan (R-AK) introduced bipartisan legislation to support and strengthen the aviation workforce by breaking down barriers for Americans looking to become commercial pilots. The *Flight Education Access Act* supports the pipeline of highly qualified pilots in the aviation workforce by providing additional financial support for prospective aviation students.

“Right now, we have an opportunity to both strengthen our critical aviation workforce and also connect more Americans with good-paying jobs,” **said Senator Baldwin.** “I am proud to work on this legislation with my Republican colleague to remove barriers for future aviators to obtain their commercial pilots license, strengthen the pipeline of talent to a family-supporting career in aviation, and meet the critical demand for pilots.”

“Pilots are the ultimate ‘essential workers,’ facilitating the free flow of commerce and people and providing basic access to vital services like health care and education. Alaskans understand this reality better than most given our state’s vast, rugged terrain, and our communities separated by thousands of miles with no roads,” **said Senator Sullivan.** “Our country is rapidly encountering a dire shortage of pilots that threatens our economic security and the well-being of our citizens. The cost of training is a significant barrier for many prospective pilots, and this is a barrier that Senator Baldwin and I are working to address with the *Flight Education Access Act*. I hope my colleagues will support our legislation to lessen the

financial burden on those considering a career in aviation, get more pilots into the pipeline, and help build a robust workforce for our future.”

Airline pilots are required to complete Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-regulated training, which typically costs approximately \$80,000 in tuition and fees associated with the four-year degree, according to the University Aviation Association. Current federal loan limits do not accommodate the full cost of pilot training, limiting access for students who cannot afford to pay out of pocket or take on high-cost private loan debt.

The *Flight Education Access Act* would fix this problem by expanding access to scholarships and loans to offset the cost of commercial pilot training. The bipartisan legislation would:

- Amend the Higher Education Act to increase maximum limits on federal student loans for students pursuing a certificate, associate degree, or bachelor’s degree flight education and training programs at eligible institutions that maintain a 70% completion rate among students.
- Create a new scholarship opportunity to offset the cost of pilot school through a public-private partnership offered by workforce partners like commercial airlines and pilot unions. The program would incentivize private partners to participate in offering scholarships with a four to one federal match to diversify the pilot workforce and strengthen the talent pipeline for airline and commercial pilots.

A version of this bill was also introduced in the House by U.S. Representatives Colin Allred (D-TX-32), Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR-5), and Steve Cohen (D-TN-9). This legislation is supported by the Regional Airline Association (RAA), Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), Airlines for America (A4A), Southwest Airlines Pilots Association (SWAPA), and National Air Carrier Association (NACA).

“I applaud Senators Baldwin and Sullivan for introducing the *Flight Education Access Act*, which will help ensure a long-term supply of pilots,” **said Robert Binns, President and Chief Executive Officer at Air Wisconsin.** “By creating a financial pathway for everyone, this legislation will not only create more pilots, but it will also make the career more accessible for people from all backgrounds, especially those who are not currently well-represented on the flight deck, such as people of color and women.”

“Airlines for America appreciates Senators Baldwin and Sullivan’s leadership on the *Flight Education Access Act*, which proposes exactly the kind of federal support needed to expand access to the aviation industry, tap into communities to increase diversity, and address financial hurdles,” **said Nicholas E. Calio, President and CEO of Airlines for America.** “We recognize the importance of securing a talent pipeline, including qualified pilots, as demand for air travel continues to increase. A4A’s carriers have been addressing this need in a myriad of ways, including creating new pilot training programs and enhancing recruitment efforts, which would be significantly enhanced by the initiatives in the FEAA.”

“It’s a great time to be an airline pilot and we know that our profession is stronger when the door is open to everyone who has the passion, talent and qualifications. We are grateful to Senators Baldwin and Sullivan for leading this effort that will help create more opportunities for people of all backgrounds to become airline pilots without weakening the training standards that have built the safest period in U.S. aviation history. By aligning federal funding support for the education and flight training required to become an airline pilot with that of other highly skilled professions, the *Flight Education Access Act* will help make aviation education more accessible to all aspiring pilots,” **said Capt. Jason Ambrosi, President of the Air Line Pilots Association.**

A one-pager on this legislation is available [here](#). Full bill text is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).