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Contact: Timothy Svoboda, (202) 225-2476

Grothman and Maloney Introduce Bipartisan Air America Act

(Washington, D.C.) – Congressman Glenn Grothman (R-WI) and Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY) have introduced the bipartisan Air America Act. This bill will correct an inequity suffered by the brave Americans who are former employees of Air America by ensuring they receive the federal retirement benefits they have earned.

Between 1950 and 1976, a group of approximately 500 U.S. citizens worked flight operations 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 fully owned by the U.S. government – making these brave Americans federal employees. The Air America Act will ensure that these 500 Americans will be given access to the federal benefits that they deserve.

The Air America Act was introduced with 11 additional original cosponsors: Val Demings (D-FL), Ruben Gallego (D-AZ), Brian Mast (R-FL), Chris Stewart (R-UT), Bradley Byrne (R-AL), Stephen F. Lynch (D-MA), Trent Kelly (R-MS), Gus Bilirakis (R-FL), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Julia Brownley (D-CA) and Michael Waltz (R-FL).

This bipartisan bill is the House companion to [S. 4380](#), authored by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), which is currently [cosponsored](#) by a bipartisan group of 31 Senators.

*“Congress has twice passed corrective legislation for other covert CIA-affiliated groups,” said **Grothman**. “It is not right to continue to ignore Air Americans. 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. Now is the time to properly recognize Air Americans for their service to our country.”*

“I’m proud to join Rep. Grothman in introducing the Air America Act. This bipartisan bill would rightfully extend federal retirement benefits to Air America workers who put their lives on the

line,” **said Rep. Maloney.** *“The bravery, tenacity, and resolve of these workers helped secure the safety of thousands of soldiers and refugees in the midst of conflict. Our country is indebted to them for their actions and this bill is a crucial step to recompense the heroes of Air America.”*

“The brave men and women employed by Air America who conducted covert operations during the Cold War, Korean War, and Vietnam War were critical to U.S. efforts,” **Rubio said.** *“I appreciate Congressman Grothman for introducing this legislation in the House to ensure that these Americans receive the long-overdue honor and recognition they deserve.”*

“For decades, Air America employees risked and gave their lives in service to their country. These brave public servants deserve to have their sacrifice recognized and should be afforded the federal retirement credit they have earned. I am proud to join my colleagues to finally recognize the Air Americans for their contributions.” **Said Rep. Brownley.**

“The brave airmen who flew for Air America were servants of the American People, just like U.S. Marines at Khe Sanh, U.S. Soldiers at Hamburger Hill, U.S. Foreign Service Officers at U.S. Embassy — Saigon, and U.S. Government employees throughout our history. They should be entitled to the credit and benefits that they earned through their service. For that reason, I’m pleased to co-sponsor the Air America Act with this bipartisan group of colleagues.” **Said Rep. Gallego.**

Background Information

Between 1950 and 1976, a group of approximately 500 U.S. citizens worked flight operations for Air America, which was portrayed as a private company. According to now-declassified documents, we now know 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). 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 would grant the individuals who worked for Air America the federal retirement credit they rightfully earned. 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 at the time 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.

This legislation will also recognize the heroes from Air America through the selection of five Air Americans for the CIA Wall of Stars and the CIA Museum’s presentations of Air America at Langley headquarters and online.

U.S. Rep. Glenn Grothman is serving his third term representing Wisconsin's 6th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.



Link to the release: <https://grothman.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=1898>