

Transportation Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6426

AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE CONNECTICUT
AIRPORT AUTHORITY REGARDING THE PROVISION OF SECURITY

Title: SERVICES AND METEOROLOGICAL EVALUATION TOWERS.

Vote Date: 3/3/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/19/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Transportation Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

This legislation is the Connecticut Airport Authority's (CAA) recommended changes to the Connecticut General Statutes. This legislation to update Connecticut's Law to be more in line with federal guidelines, provide a clearer relationship between CAA and DESPP, and addresses the safety of meteorological evaluation towers. CAA is recommending that statute is changed due to incidents across the country. Since these towers are typically temporary in nature, increasing visibility is imperative for the safety of pilots who are familiar with the terrain and may not be aware of a temporary structure.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

Sections 1 and 2 address law enforcement services at Bradley International Airport in response to recent recommendations by the Auditors of Public Accounts (APA). In a recent audit of the payments between the CAA and DESPP, the APA recommended revisions to PA 09-7 to direct the CAA and DESPP to enter into an agreement outlining the contractual relationship for the provision of law enforcement services at Bradley Airport, to emphasize the CAA's federal requirements as they pertain to the contract and to update terminology. While the CAA is already in the process of negotiating such a contract with DESPP, these sections allow the CAA to resolve our audit findings and set the foundation for a better-defined working relationship with Bradley Airport's law enforcement providers.

Section 3 addresses a recent issue that has been raised by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). After several accidents across the country involving aircraft impacting

unmarked meteorological evaluation towers (METs), the NTSB issued a recommendation to all states suggesting a requirement to mark such towers. METs are typically temporary structures that are used to assess an area's viability as a wind farm, and they are generally installed and removed in short periods of time. This can be problematic for pilots who feel a familiarity with the terrain in a given area, and the towers usually stand under the 200 ft. threshold that requires automatic Federal Aviation Administration coordination. As such, they can become a hazard for pilots who are flying in the vicinity. The CAA has proposed the language in Section 3 to prescribe simple paintings, markings, and safety sleeves on any related guy-wires to enhance visibility. The proposal also establishes penalties for those who fail to adhere to such marking requirements. These minor, but important, marking requirements will help improve the safety of aviation across the state.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Wyatt Bosworth, Assistant Counsel, CBIA: "CBIA requests that this committee pass JFS language that allows for current, unclassified employees to opt-out of the state retirement system, and all future, unclassified CAA employees be automatically enrolled into a separate, CAA-established, 401(a)-type plan. While this modest proposal only affects 30 non-union employees, it could generate millions of dollars worth of savings for the CAA and lower costs for the airlines operating at BDL.

CBIA respectfully urges the passage of H.B. 6426 with JFS language that addresses the above concerns."

Betsy Gara, Executive Director, CT Council of Small Towns: "Minor adjustments to non-union retirement plan benefits, which CAA has recommended, will result in significant savings for Bradley, which will position it to attract and retain airlines, ensuring its long-term viability. COST urges lawmakers to amend HB-6426 to incorporate CAA's recommendations to make these adjustments. COST urges support for HB-6426"

Hayden James, First Selectman, East Granby: "East Granby is one of four towns surrounding Bradley International Airport. As East Granby's First Selectman, I am requesting that HB-6426 be amended to include relief for the airport of legacy pension costs that make them uncompetitive in their marketplace. In my view, this amendment will better position the airport for robust post COVID economic recovery."

Jeff Hugabonne, Chair, Connecticut State Emergency Communications Committee, and Michael Ryan, President, CT Broadcasters Association: "Since H.B. 6426 specifically targets towers that are not broadcast antenna, I'm asking on behalf of the Connecticut Broadcasters Association that all television and radio station antenna that are regulated by the FCC in Connecticut be explicitly excluded from this bill, as well as towers operated by stations in the immediate vicinity of their antenna, such as Doppler radar towers."

George Novac, President and CEO, National Air Carrier Association: " Frontier and Spirit have long-standing concerns about the excessive fringe benefit rates that are assessed on CAA staff at BDL, which are much higher than those at other regional airports. We respectfully request that you include JFS language in HB-6426 in recognition of these issues. This important modification would give non-union employees the ability to opt out of the state

retirement system and ensure that all future non-union employees are automatically placed in a CAA-established 401(a)-type plan. This JFS language would greatly reduce the fringe rates of non-union staff, saving the CAA and, by extension, NACA member carriers, approximately \$3 million once it is fully implemented."

Sean Williams, Vice-President of State and Local Affairs, Airlines for America: "I write today to urge your support for the CAA's proposal to address the CAA's retirement plan proposal through JFS language. As you know, the CAA's proposal would provide current, unclassified CAA employees with the ability to voluntarily opt out of the state retirement system. The proposal also ensures that future, unclassified CAA employees hired after the proposal becomes law will be automatically enrolled into a separate CAA-established 401(a)-type plan."

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None submitted.

Reported by: Justin Kaiser

Date: 3/19/2021