POSITION PAPER
Helicopter Association International Supports the Senate Bill 1405, the FAA
Reauthorization Act of 2017, and Opposes House Bill 2997, which includes Congress’
Proposal to Privatize the U.S. Air Traffic Control System

Synopsis
There are currently two plans to support future funding for the Federal Aviation Administration
(FAA) over the next several years, one in the U.S. Senate and one in the U.S. House of
Representatives.

To best serve the needs of our members and General Aviation, Helicopter Association
International (HAI) supports Senate Bill 1405, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2017, which
reauthorizes federal aviation programs through fiscal year 2021.

Equally, HAI strongly opposes legislation in the House of Representatives, H.R. 2997 the 21st
Century AIRR Act, specifically because it includes privatization of the U.S. Air Traffic Control
System.

Explanation of Support for Senate Bill 1405
HAI believes Senate Bill 1405 better serves its members, General Aviation, and ultimately, the
entire aviation industry. In addition to providing stabilized funding through 2021, this bill
provides increased levels of support for users throughout the spectrum of aviation.

Among the elements in the legislation, this bill provides for:

- Air Traffic Control and NextGen: Acts on independent recommendations to improve the FAA’s
transition to 21st-century air traffic control technologies, commonly called NextGen, and
provides for safety and efficiency assessments of these technologies by the FAA.
- Increased consumer protections and air travel enhancements: This includes protections for the
flying public and passengers needing assistance throughout their air travel.
- Drone safety and innovation: Provides authorization for the FAA to continue registering drones,
boosting enforcement efforts and criminalizing reckless flight behavior around manned aircraft
and runways.
- Airline Safety Improvements and Aviation Access: Supports contract air traffic control towers
serving primarily rural areas, increases preparedness against the spread of communicable
diseases and imposes new laws regarding transportation of lithium ion batteries.
- General Aviation Safety and Protections: Offers GA Airports more flexibility to facilitate
infrastructure investment, levels medical certificate requirements across multiple types of
aircraft, and expands the rights of pilots in FAA enforcement hearings.
- Infrastructure Investments: Increases funding for the Airport Improvement Program to an
annual level of $3.75 billion, while requiring a study and recommendations for upgrading and
restoring the nation’s airport infrastructure.
“We commend Chairman John Thune (R-S.D.) and Ranking Member Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) for reaching out to members of the general aviation community during the drafting process so that the committee could better understand the implications of proposed policies to our industry,” said Matthew Zuccaro, president and CEO of HAI.

“This bill represents how the process should work,” Zuccaro said. “We worked constructively with the Senate, and they produced a bill that positively addresses and supports concerns across the entire aviation spectrum.”

**Recommendation Against House Bill 2997**

HAI strongly urges its members – and all users of aviation in the United States – to oppose H.R. 2997, the 21st Century AIRR Act. Simply put, this Bill seeks to privatize the world’s safest and most efficient Air Traffic Control system, a proposal that benefits only private interests.

H.R. 2997 would freely transfer government assets and control of the nation’s ATC out of the FAA and place it in the hands of non-profit corporation. Board membership is comprised of private parties with airline interests and the governance structure and nominating panels do not directly address nor support the helicopter community. The Board is largely unaccountable to Congress, will have sweeping powers to modify airspace, access to airports, determine where resources are deployed, and set charges and fees for ATC services.

Agreeing firmly with the sentiments of most Americans, HAI continues to stand against privatization of the nation’s air traffic control (ATC) system. “We add our voice to those of five other major general aviation (GA) associations in opposing the 21st Century Aviation Innovation, Reform and Reauthorization (AIRR) Act,” says Zuccaro.

“We cosigned a letter that outlines our belief that this legislation will do nothing to increase the efficiency and safety of a system that is already the world’s best ATC program. The proponents of privatization point to delays in implementing NextGen technology as their rationale for making the change,” Zuccaro says. “In that case, why not just privatize that initiative and leave air traffic control where it belongs — with the professionals of the FAA. I’ve said it before, many times: what is the problem they are trying to fix?”

“We’d be much happier if Congress would assist aviation as a whole by creating a long-term, stabilized funding system for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA),” continues Zuccaro. “Allowing the FAA to continue to do what they have been doing very well means that we can continue to fly safely.
“A recent study by CNBC shows that the majority of Americans agree that ATC privatization is a bad idea,” concludes Zuccaro. “No one seems to want our government to give away the ATC system.”

HAI also notes that supporters of ATC privatization repeatedly point to successful privatized ATC programs outside of the U.S. However, privatized systems in Australia, Canada and across Europe have all placed limitations on General Aviation (GA) access to major hub airports.

“Privatization is an attack on General Aviation. This industry generates over $219 billion in total economic output, supports 1.1 million jobs, and includes a network of thousands of airports that connect many rural communities to the rest of the world. Restricting General Aviation access to airports also restricts this dynamic American industry,” says Zuccaro. “Again, what problem are they trying to solve?”