June 16, 2017

The Honorable John Thune  
Chairman  
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson,

Our associations represent the individuals and companies that make up a significant portion of the diverse and interrelated general aviation industry in the United States. This is an industry that generates more than one million jobs, and more than $200 billion for the nation’s economy.

Our industry’s first and foremost concern is for safety. Safety is the bedrock of our operating principals. Federal airspace preemption allows one national regulatory authority, staffed by professional subject matter experts, to oversee the National Airspace System (NAS) with a common set of rules and laws understood by all operators, either manned or unmanned. Individual pilots train to these regulations and company operators structure their operating procedures based on these common set of regulations. This long-established structure is an integral component of aviation safety.

FAA airspace preemption ensures that all operators know the rules of the road. Cracking open FAA airspace preemption to other entities introducing regulations for either manned or unmanned aircraft creates an unknown operating environment with reduced safety margins. Safety is created by knowing how other operators will transition through airspace and what missions they are performing. Introducing multiple variables of potential operational behavior just by crossing imaginary political boundaries adds risk to the operator. At worst, these multiple variables may produce conflicting procedures or incentives leading to significant danger.

We should not rush to roll back preemption when it has served to improve aviation safety. We appreciate the committee’s commitment to federal preemption and respectfully request the committee maintain its strong support of aviation safety through preemption.

Sincerely,

Air Medical Operators Association  
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association  
Army Aviation Association of America, Inc.  
Association of Air Medical Services  
Experimental Aircraft Association  
General Aviation Manufacturers Association  
Helicopter Association International  
National Air Transport Association  
National Business Aviation Association

cc: Members of the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee