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September 14, 2010

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Secretary
US Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano,

The Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) represents more than 142,000 model aviation enthusiasts and nearly 2,500 chartered model aviation clubs throughout the United States. I am writing today concerning the detrimental affect Temporary Flight Restrictions (TFR) in the National Airspace System impose on model aviation.

As you know, model aviation has been identified as one of the activities restricted by some TFRs, and AMA believes that in most cases these restrictions are unnecessary and overly onerous for the modeling community.


AMA sanctions upwards of 3,000 aeromodeling events each year ranging from local club events to regional, national, and international gatherings and competitions. Many events are planned months in advance and require a sizable financial investment on the part of our local clubs. Numerous events are conducting solely to support the needs of the community and AMA clubs often donate a portion of the proceeds from these events to local charities. TFRs affecting model aviation have the potential to curtail these activities and create a significant economic and social hardship.

AMA has implemented a process to alert our members of an impending TFR. However, the typical short notice of a TFR coupled with, in many cases, the constant modifications to the TFR make it difficult for us to meet the level of awareness in our membership that we believe is necessary. Given today's environment, AMA recognizes the need for safety and security during times of VIP travel. However, the current process makes it difficult for model aviation enthusiasts to be made aware of, and comply with, short notice TFRs. In spite of our best efforts, the current process leaves the door open to the possibility that modelers may find themselves unintentionally in violation of a TFR and subject to penalties simply because of the mechanics of the process.

AMA believes the threat attributed to model aviation is overstated and we ask that the current TFR process be reviewed. We also offer our assistance in this review. Our expertise and knowledge of model aviation can play an important role in developing a workable solution and creating a TFR system that ensures the appropriate level of security while, at the same time, allows recreational modelers to continue to enjoy their hobby without the imposition of excessive restrictions.

AMA looks forward to the opportunity to help address this very important issue.

Sincerely,


Dave Mathewson
President

cc: Randy Babbitt, FAA Administrator

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Bringing Modelers Together