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Aviation maintenance education calls on Congress to modernize outdated FAA maintenance technical school regulations

The regulation dictating what aviation maintenance educational programs must teach aspiring mechanics has not been significantly updated in more than 50 years. In an age where technological advances are constantly driving innovation for safer and more efficient aircraft, schools are required to teach techniques for maintaining the Wright Flyer. Industry is left with the cost of retraining graduates to complete basic tasks required to maintain a modern, sophisticated aircraft.

In November 2015, the FAA issued a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) for Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 147, the regulation governing aviation maintenance technician schools that hold an FAA certificate.

In its comments to the rulemaking, a coalition of aviation organizations decried the agency's continued reliance on class time at the expense of technical capability and called for a less prescriptive rule that would exempt schools already beholden to Department of Education quality standards from duplicative oversight.

Given the agency's failure to timely address rulemaking for part 147, the 2018 FAA Reauthorization bill specifically directed the agency to promulgate a final rule within six months, a date that has come and gone.

In April 2019, three-and-a-half years after publication of the NPRM, the FAA published a supplemental proposed rule. The proposal would remove seat time requirements, but layers in additional prescriptive requirements and duplicative oversight that will stifle the already inadequate workforce pipeline and exacerbate an imminent workforce.

Given the anticipated rulemaking timeline—agency officials have indicated a final rule is two years away from publication—and the FAA's unwillingness to promulgate a performance-based rule, the aviation community is asking Congress to step in.

The Promoting Aviation Regulations for Technical Training (PARTT) 147 Act will empower performance-based curriculum development and facilitate the creation of programs that meet industry needs. Under the Act, schools will maintain reliance on FAA mechanic testing standards that ensure certificated individuals have the knowledge and skill required to safely and adequately perform work on aircraft and components.

To cosponsor the legislation, Senators may contact Sen. Inhofe's policy advisor at dan_hillenbrand@inhofe.senate.gov; House members contact Rep. Young's legislative assistant at kevin.swanson@mail.house.gov.

About ATEC: *ATEC is a partnership of aviation maintenance training schools and employers. The council is dedicated to promoting and supporting technician education through its communications, advocacy programs and networking events.*