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Aviation maintenance education opposes congressional efforts to eliminate vital aviation mechanic workforce pipeline

If enacted, the Protect Students Act of 2019 (S.867), masked rhetorically as a student protection aid, would threaten a vital source of aviation maintenance technical personnel. The legislation would severely limit proprietary aviation maintenance technician schools (AMTS) from serving students and veterans, and negatively impact aerospace companies looking to hire Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-certified airframe & powerplant (A&P) mechanics and other aviation technical personnel.

Historically, the U.S. Government has required many things of private tax paying (“proprietary”) schools that it does not require of public universities, community colleges, or non-profit institutions. One of these requirements is the 90/10 rule, which mandates that proprietary schools derive no more than 90% of their income from Title IV financial aid funding sources (such as Pell Grants and Stafford Loans). The remaining 10% must come from other funding sources such as student payments, family contributions, employer assistance, vocational rehab, Veterans Administration benefits, and the GI Bill.

S.867 seeks to change the 90/10 ratio to 85/15—meaning the 10% of required income from non-Title IV sources would increase to 15%—and recategorize GI Bill benefits as a federal Title IV funding source. If Veterans Benefits were considered Title IV funding, many of our proprietary schools would have to stop taking GI Bill funds to meet the new ratio requirements. Consequently, the military would default on its promise to veterans that they can use their GI Bill at any accredited and approved institution of higher education, and likely school shut downs would cost the aerospace industry a quarter of its mechanic school graduates.

The proposed law comes at a time when the aviation industry is preparing for a massive technical workforce shortage. ATEC’s recent [Pipeline Report](#) found that mechanics are retiring faster than they are being replaced; the mechanic population is expected to decrease 5% in the next 15 years. Oliver Wyman, a technical consulting group, [forecasts](#) that demand for aviation maintenance technicians will outstrip supply by 2022. The Aeronautical Repair Station Association [estimates](#) the technician shortage is costing industry \$100 million per month. Meanwhile, forecasts by the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), [Boeing](#), and [Airbus](#) project a need for thousands of additional mechanics in the next 10-20 years.

Industry looks to Congress to support its efforts to grow the pipeline; we ask it not to enact legislation that would tear it down.

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.*