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Statement of Amanda Wright Lane
Spokesperson
The Wright Family

HEARING ON H.R. 280, TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL AVIATION HERITAGE AREA

SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION, AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

STATEMENT OF AMANDA WRIGHT LANE, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,
RECREATION, AND PUBLIC LANDS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING
H.R. 280, TO ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL AVIATION HERITAGE AREA

SEPTEMBER 16, 2003

Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Amanda Wright Lane and I am the great grand-niece of Orville and Wilbur Wright. It is my privilege to testify here today in support of HR 280, the National Aviation Heritage Act. I do so not only as a member of the Dayton/Miami Valley community, but also as a representative of the Wright Family.

I offer my testimony with three specific points in mind. First, Ohio is the birthplace of aviation. Aviation began there a hundred years ago, and throughout that time, the industry was sustained and further refined to be what we know it to be today because of what has taken place in Dayton and the surrounding region. It is no coincidence that the home of the world's first pilots, my great grand uncles, Wilbur and Orville, and the home of the world's first man to walk on the moon, Neil Armstrong, are located within 60 miles of each other. Today, we find aviation history being made at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, as its scientists and engineers create aviation breakthroughs such as "invisible airplanes" and stealth technology. Our accomplishments are many, our history is rich and full, and worthy of National Heritage Area designation. Second, we are a community that has always passionately supported aviation and aviation history. We have lived it, and we have memorialized it in many of our local institutions, including the Aviation Trail, the National Aviation Hall of Fame and the John W Berry Sr. Wright Brothers Aviation Center at Carillon Park, just to name a few. We have provided both moral, as well as, financial support to these institutions. Lastly, I come to testify before you because now we wish to share the nationally significant stories of Dayton and the Miami Valley with others who have the same passion about aviation as we do. We believe it is an important part of American History and see it as a story that explains one of mankind's most impressive achievements-powered flight. With passage of the National Aviation Heritage Act we can tell this most important story in a way that is more fitting and more effective than if we do it on our own. Our heritage in aviation is not just a national story, but one that is of interest to many around the world. In my travels throughout the Nation this year, I have experienced first hand the interest expressed by many in the aviation history of my great grand uncles and those who followed in their footsteps.

I see my role in this testimony today as one of a "color analyst" and my intention is to help you understand some of the specific examples of how our aviation heritage inspires citizens in the greater Dayton area, and beyond. Aviation and aeronautical science were born in Dayton, in Uncle Orv and Uncle Wil's bicycle shop, at the turn of the last century. I'd like to share with you now the world's first pilot's description of flight over Huffman Prairie:

"The engine is put in motion...You take your seat at the center of the machine beside the operator. He slips the cable and you shoot forward. Before reaching the end of the track the operator moves the front rudder and the machine lifts from the ground like a kite... The ground under you is at first a perfect blur, but as you rise, the objects become clearer...If you did not take the precaution to fasten your hat before starting, you have probably lost it by this time. The operator stops the motor while still high in the air. The

machine comes down... and after sliding a few feet, comes to a rest....The motor close beside you kept up an almost deafening roar during the whole flight, yet in your excitement, you didn't notice it until it stopped." Orville Wright, September 1908

In July of this year I had the opportunity to understand the moment Uncle Orv was describing when I witnessed a flight over Huffman Prairie this summer, during Dayton's Centennial of Flight Celebration. While the circumstances were different, the exhilaration of that experience was the same. Instead of Uncle Orv at the controls, it was former Senator and U. S. Astronaut, Jake Garn in a Wright Flyer, in the air over the historic field which is now a part of our National Park system. His flying machine was not a Wright original, but rather a machine designed and built by Utah State University engineering students and their professors as a tribute to the 100th anniversary of flight. It was built with some of the world's most modern composite technology materials, but in the air, the machine looked like it was made of muslin, wire, spruce, and a dab of glue. Thank goodness, Uncle Orv recorded his feelings about those early flights. When Senator Garn taxied to a stop, he could barely speak. With great emotion and moist eyes, he tried to tell reporters and spectators what a joy it was to fly in a machine like that, with a stick and rudder. It is those feelings of passion, as expressed by the senator that demonstrate the kind of passion I'm talking about.

American passion for aviation soars in many different directions. In the Dayton area alone this summer, we hosted authors, artists, photographers, historians, educators, engineers, and scientists...all who have an intense interest in looking to the skies. Celebrities like John Travolta, and heroes like Senator John Glenn, Dr. Neil Armstrong, and the Tuskegee Airmen participated in Dayton's and other celebrations as their personal tribute to history and flying. And this year, the Dayton Air Show was attended by an unprecedented crowd that came from around the world to enjoy performances by the world's best pilots... the Thunderbirds, the Blue Angels, and the Canadian Snowbirds to name a few.

The celebrations were magnificent and grand. Thousands of people were on hand this 4th of July when President Bush visited Ohio to talk about the role of aviation has played in our nation's freedom and peacekeeping efforts. His trip to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base was a salute to the Base's historic role in aviation's past, present, and future.

In 2003, the dream of flight has and continues to be celebrated from New York City to Pasadena, Osh Kosh to Kitty Hawk. But for my family and I, the most significant show of interest in our heritage sometimes... often times, comes in the smaller events in this historic year. In May, I spoke to a Cincinnati 4th grade class on the subject of why the Wright Brothers were successful in unlocking the secrets of flight when others weren't. After my talk, many of the kids surrounded me, all asking questions. As they slowly drifted away, I was left alone with my model of the 1903 Flyer and one last boy. He was standing back a bit, with his hands in his uniform pants pockets, and he was wearing glasses that were bigger than he was. When I smiled at him, he moved forward, picked up the tiny flying machine, and said, "Mrs. Amanda Wright Lane, this stuff just fascinates me!" Passion in the smallest package...

Moments like that one are the perfect testimony as to why our nation is celebrating man's ability to overcome the endless obstacles to fly and why a National Aviation Heritage Area is a wonderful idea. The people of Ohio are fully engaged, and they are ready to continue the work of preservation, conservation, interpretation, and protection of our nation's most unique and truly American legacy...the story of our history of aviation. Our collaborative, community-based effort began in Dayton over 20 years ago with the establishment of the Aviation Trail. That effort grew and with the help of Congress in 1992, we created a partnership National Park that will be one of the focal points of the National Aviation Heritage Area. With passage of HR280 we can include other partners and sites that are an important part of America's aviation legacy. That's why the designation of a National Aviation Heritage Area is so important to us all. There is still much to be done, but fortunately, there are many of us in Dayton and the entire proposed heritage area that are willing to do this important work.

And needless to say, they are passionate about it!

I want to leave you with some words of my grandfather, Milton Wright, from the dedication of his uncles' 1903 Wright Flyer to the Smithsonian Institution in 1948. These words remind me of that young 4th grader:

"The aeroplane means many things to many people. To some it may be a vehicle for romantic adventure or simply quick transportation. To others it may be a military weapon or a means of relieving suffering. To me it represents the fabric, the glue, the spruce, the sheet metal, and the wire which, put together under

commonplace circumstances but with knowledge and skill, gave substance to dreams and fulfillment to hopes.”

In closing, I would like for you to consider one amendment to the proposed legislation involving the assistance the Secretary may provide to the public and private organizations within the Heritage Area. The proposed change will more clearly define the roles of all parties as described in HR 280. This suggested amendment is based on language found in PL 104-333 which pertains to the Ohio and Erie Canal National Heritage Corridor. This authority has proven exceptionally effective in creating and sustaining a wide variety of public/private partnerships. I have included suggested language as an attachment to these remarks.

I want to thank Congressman Hobson for introducing and vigorously supporting this legislation. He has demonstrated outstanding leadership on behalf of his constituents. I want to thank you Mr. Chairman and the other members of the Subcommittee for allowing me the opportunity and privilege to offer my testimony to you today.

Attachment

Suggested amendment-HR 280

Section 107. Technical and Financial Assistance; Other Federal Agencies.

Redesignate subsection (b) as subsection (c) and insert the following new subsection:

“(b) Other Assistance-The Secretary may provide to the public and private organizations within the Heritage Area, including the management entity for the Heritage Area, operational assistance as appropriate to support the implementation of the Management Plan, subject to the availability of appropriations. The Secretary is authorized to enter into cooperative agreements with public and private organizations for the purposes of implementing this subsection.”

Supplemental

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Summary of comments: The Wright Family strongly supports the creation of the National Aviation Heritage Area as proposed in HR 280. A number of nationally significant sites exist within the proposed area, and should be made available for all citizens to experience. Expressions of support for the establishment of the National Aviation Heritage Area have been received by the Wright family from not just residents of Dayton but from citizens throughout the Nation.