



Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission

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New State Aviation License Plate Unveiled During AOPA Regional Fly-In at Norman Westheimer

NORMAN, OK - In celebration of the state's second largest economic engine, aviation and aerospace, a new Oklahoma specialty license plate could soon beautify the bumpers of automobiles with the simple yet soaring slogan: "Aviation."

The plate, requested by the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission (OAC) during the 2017 legislative session, was originally considered for passage via Senate Bill 196 and House Bill 1269 by Senator Gary Stanislawski (R-Tulsa) and Representative Elise Hall (R-Oklahoma City). The language later became law through a license plate omnibus bill by Sen. Stanislawski and Representative Chuck Strohm (R-Tulsa) and was approved by Governor Mary Fallin in May. The plate would be the state's official aviation and aerospace specialty plate. In recognition of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) Regional Fly-In, the unveiling occurred at the Norman Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee breakfast Friday, September 8, 2017, at the University of Oklahoma's Max Westheimer Airport in Norman, OK.

The Aeronautics Commission contacted Sen. Stanislawski, a pilot, with the idea during the summer of 2016. "I thought it was a great idea," Stanislawski said. "The funds collected from the plate would go toward aviation education programs and public-use airport infrastructure, highlighting the importance of the state's aviation system in Oklahoma."

The final bill by Stanislawski and Strohm, housed in Title 47 of Oklahoma Statute reads, in part: such plates shall be designed and issued to any person wishing to demonstrate support for the Oklahoma aviation industry and to promote awareness of aviation and aerospace. Such plates shall be designed in consultation with the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission and shall be issued to any person in any combination of numbers and letters from one to a maximum of seven, as for personalized plates. Twenty-four Dollars (\$24.00) of the fee collected shall be deposited in the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission Revolving Fund, for expenditure as provided in Section 91 of Title 3 of the Oklahoma Statutes which reads, in part: "All monies accruing to the fund are hereby appropriated and may be budgeted and expended by the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission for airport construction and rehabilitation programs and, general operations of the agency, for promoting the awareness of aviation and aerospace, and providing financial support for aviation education programs to address the need for a skilled and competent aviation workforce."

The total fee for the plate would be \$35 annually with \$11 directed to the Oklahoma Tax Commission.

"Wiley Post Regional Airport resides within the House district I serve, and has a total economic impact of \$187.7 million annually. This gives me a unique perspective as to the importance of aviation. I was eager to author and support this license plate legislation as these funds allow OAC to create more robust aviation education and airport infrastructure programs, ensuring aerospace industry interest for future generations," said Hall.

The law will go into effect Nov. 1, 2017.

“This past session, I worked with Aeronautics on several pieces of legislation to help the state’s public-use airport system infrastructure remain viable for business and general aviation,” said Senator Eddie Fields, (R-Wynona). Fields serves as Senate Co-Chair for the Aviation Caucus at the Oklahoma legislature. “I believe this will be a successful endeavor for the agency, bringing much needed emphasis to the state’s \$44 billion industry,” said Fields.

Representative Jeff Coody (R-Grandfield), also a pilot, and who serves as the House Co-Chair for the Aviation Caucus said, “The need to create more pilots not only in Oklahoma, but nationally, places a demand on the Aeronautics Commission’s resources to educate young people about aviation minded careers. Funding from these plates will help the agency reach rural areas to foster aviation and aerospace interest.”

The designer of the plate, Christopher Nick, is trained in the tradition of the old masters and works currently as a full-time illustrator. Reducing his fee significantly, Nick agreed to design and paint the specialty plate, volunteering his research time which involved more than two months work.

“When OAC first approached me with the idea, I was not sure that an oil painting would translate to a license plate. The confined canvas of 11.5” by 5.5” does not leave much room to convey the importance of the role aviation has in this state,” said Nick.

Nick said his first step in his research led him to Tinker Air Force Base, where he talked with several pilots that said the E3 Sentry Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) is what Oklahoma military aviation is all about. Nick said he knew it had to be included in the design. A Cessna 172 and a commercial jet were also added representing the three facets of aviation in the state: military, general, and commercial aviation. “I could not be more pleased with the final plate design and would encourage all aviation and aerospace enthusiasts to purchase one,” said Nick.

Christopher Nick was born and raised in rural Oklahoma and received his formal art training at Atelier LeSueur in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Atelier school system is based on the curriculum of training the artist in the tradition of the old masters. Nick's training descends directly from the 17th century artist Jacques-Louis David. His images have been published on book covers, children's books, figurines, textiles, puzzles, ceramics, calendars, greeting cards and magazines.

In 2001, Nick was chosen among Oklahoma artists by First Lady Kathy Keating to paint the state's Official Oklahoma Governor's Christmas Card. The original oil titled 'Believe' is now in the collection of the Governor's Mansion.

Nick's paintings have been exhibited throughout the United States and are owned by Hollywood celebrities, the Oklahoma State Capitol Building, corporate headquarters and many private collections. His work has been featured in American Artist Magazine and he is a current member of the National American Portrait Society.

Motorists can get the aviation and aerospace specialty plate personalized or pre-numbered. The plate is in its final approval stage with the Oklahoma Tax Commission and looks best personalized with five to six characters. After the law goes into effect November 1, 2017, 100 people must purchase the plate within 180 days before the Tax Commission would place it into circulation.

Top 20 State Aviation & Aerospace Facts & Figures

Oklahoma Aerospace

- Measured in 2017, the footprint of aviation and aerospace in Oklahoma has grown dramatically in the past 20 years as one of the fastest growing sectors of the state's economy, increasing by 250%.
- Oklahoma's aviation and aerospace industry is the state's second largest economic engine, providing more than 206,000 jobs and generating an economic impact of \$43.7 billion annually.
- More than 1,200 aerospace companies are located throughout the state.
- The average annual salary for an Oklahoman working in the aerospace industry is nearly \$65,000.
- Aerospace is the state's top export.
- The American Airlines Maintenance and Engineering Base in Tulsa is the world's largest commercial aircraft repair facility, employing more than 6,000 workers.
- The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, home to the FAA Academy in Oklahoma City trains 87,000 students annually and also employs over 5,000 workers.

Oklahoma Airports

- Oklahoma's 105 general aviation airports and 4 commercial airports account for \$10.6 billion in economic activity.
- With 135 public-use airports, including 109 that are publicly owned, Oklahoma is ranked in the top 10 nationally for the number of airports per capita.
- Out of the 109 publicly owned airports, 105 are general aviation airports, including 49 that are regional business airports. Forty-five (45) of those 49 have jet-capable runways of at least 5,000 feet in length.
- In Oklahoma, 95% of our state's population is within 30-minutes drive time of a jet-capable airport.
- Oklahoma has more than 5,571 general aviation aircraft that are actively flying in the state and nearly 9,600 pilots.

Oklahoma Military Aviation

- Aerospace and defense in Oklahoma is responsible for \$27 billion in sales.
- Over 7.4% of the state's economy is attributed to aerospace and defense.
- Military aviation is responsible for the largest part of the total economic activity, yielding \$19.3 billion annually.
- Tinker Air Force Base, the state's largest single-site employer, having a \$17.1 billion impact, Tinker supports 56,901 jobs with a \$3.9 billion payroll, and has spending of \$13.2 billion.
- Altus Air Force Base, with an impact of \$1.24 billion, supports 8,881 jobs with a payroll of \$470 million and annual spending of \$767 million.
- Vance Air Force Base has an impact of \$925 million and supports 6,310 jobs with a payroll of \$301 million, and annual spending of \$624 million.

- Oklahoma Army National Guard aviation components have an impact of \$32.5 million; support 557 jobs with a payroll of \$21.3 million, and have annual spending of \$11.2 million.

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The mission of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission is to promote aviation, which includes ensuring that the needs of commerce and communities across the state are met by the state's 109 publicly owned airports that comprise the Oklahoma Airport System, and helping ensure the viability of the state's aerospace industry.