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May 29, 2009

The Honorable Del Yonts  
Mayor, Town of Grant-Valkaria  
P.O. Box 766  
Grant, FL 32949

Dear Mayor Yonts:

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) represents the general aviation interests of 416,000 members, more than two-thirds of the nation's pilots – including 32,627 of our members in the state of Florida. On behalf of our membership, AOPA is committed to ensuring the future viability and development of general aviation airports and their facilities as part of a national transportation system.

We are opposed to the proposed Ordinance No. 2009-03, which would prohibit flight training at the Valkaria Airport.

In adopting the proposed ordinance, the Town of Grant-Valkaria would be overstepping its authority in attempting to regulate a transportation resource outside of its jurisdiction. In governing the nation's aviation system, Congress has specifically acted to pre-empt this authority to the federal government, specifically to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and federal courts have consistently upheld its right to do so.

Brevard County is the owner and airport sponsor, and as such it entered into agreements with the FAA, to make the airport available for all aeronautical uses and users. Further, the County agreed that it would not cause or permit any activity or action at the airport which would interfere with its use for aeronautical purposes. Flight training is defined by the FAA as a legitimate aeronautical activity and must be accommodated at the airport. Based on these obligations flight training activities cannot be legislated out of existence at Valkaria by the Town government.

Any type of prohibition on flight training at Valkaria Airport would restrict pilots from complying with Federal laws requiring periodic recurrent training and operational experience. This has a direct and detrimental effect on the safety of flight operations. In fact instead of providing for the health, safety and welfare of its citizens with this ordinance, the Town has exposed them to potential harm by degrading the basic level of safety provided through pilot compliance with the FAA requirements.

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Safety of flight is paramount to aviators, and continuous flight training is essential to that goal. We encourage you and the members of the Town Council to withdraw the proposed ordinance and instead, work collaboratively with the County to address the concerns of the citizens while continuing to allow legitimate aeronautical activities at the airport.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John L. Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

John L. Collins  
Manager  
Airport Policy

cc:

Don Whitehouse, Chairperson, Grant-Valkaria Planning and Zoning Board  
Steven Borowski, Airport Manager  
Brevard County Board of County Commissioners  
William Ashbaker, State Aviation Manager, Florida DOT  
Dean Stringer, Manager, FAA Orlando Airports District Office