

February 19, 2004

Representative Rick Boucher  
**2187 Rayburn House Office Building**  
**Washington, D.C. 20515**  
**202-225-3861**  
**202-225-0442(fax)**

Honorable Congressman Boucher,

I am President of the Mountain Empire Pilots Association and a practicing physician in Smyth County. I am writing on behalf of local pilots in the Smyth-Wythe County area seeking your assistance in regards to the status of federal funding for our local airport. Mountain Empire Airport (KMKJ) is utilized by local industries in a two county area as well as aviation enthusiast from several local counties. Often business executives as well as corporate leaders get their first impression of the Smyth-Wythe counties by way of aviation and the appearance/services provided at KMKJ. As you well know, these counties are in much need of new industries that might provide needed employment for our local citizens. At this time the airport is in need of renovation and repair of the terminal building and hangars that are presently in place on the field. It is for this purpose that I seek your assistance.

As an organization, the Mountain Empire Pilots Association works closely with the Smyth-Wythe Airport Commission in attempting to positively impact on services/facilities at KMKJ. At this time we are told that little funding is available from local, state, or federal sources above and beyond that which is required for basic operations at the field. However, as I travel around the 9th district, the condition of general aviation facilities in our surrounding localities suggest to me that funding has been available and improvements are being made. Presently KMKJ airport is in need of terminal building upkeep. The passenger waiting area has not been upgraded for the past twenty years. The bathrooms used by passengers including business executives assessing our area as a potential site for new companies provides only the minimum of necessities and space. The funding at present does not provide for cable TV services that would provide a diversion for corporate pilots who must wait at the field for executive passengers. The hangars presently used to base local aircraft are in ill repair. The equipment utilized for mowing operations presently is not operational. We are informed that monies funding equipment upkeep is presently available only on an "emergency basis." At this time we presently have no FBO manager actively on the field despite attempts by the Smyth-Wythe Airport Commission to fill the position since this past July.

We feel that the present status of KMKJ airport negatively impacts on the ability of the area to induce new business to locate to this region and creates a less than favorable impression on new visitors who come to our part of the mountain empire region by way of aviation. We do not seek new buildings or major expansion but hope to significantly upgrade what presently exist. Your assistance is requested in aiding us to seek funding from federal and state levels with which we might rectify some of the deficiencies which presently exist at KMKJ.

I am sincerely,

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