



Special Advisor for Aviation and Aerospace Concept Paper

OVERVIEW

While perceived more relating to commercial airline travel or NASA, the aerospace and aviation industry is an assemblage of market sectors that deal with all types of flight within and beyond Earth's atmosphere. These market sectors include everything from gliders to uncrewed aerial vehicles, to commercial aircraft and the new Artemis moon rocket. Also included are major flight-vehicle systems such as propulsion and aviation electronics and key support systems necessary for the testing, operation, and maintenance of flight vehicles.

The industry faces many challenges when choosing to locate, operate, or expand services in Virginia. When interacting with Virginia government, businesses, NGOs, and agencies often must interact with numerous agencies: Aviation, Tax, Environmental Quality, Education, Commerce and Trade, Transportation, Economic Development, Labor, local governments, and many others.

The environment is complicated and confusing when navigating the government maze of agencies and regulations. The maze often provides mixed answers to a business as to regulatory requirements, with confusion resulting between regulatory bodies. When agency assistance is required, the business is often at the mercy of an agency's response time and often lacks understanding of business cost to lengthy decision or response times. These challenges often hamper business location and growth in Virginia.

In February 2019, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine created the position of Senior Advisor for Aerospace and Defense. The position was intended to protect Ohio's military and aerospace installations. It was also tasked with identifying and seeking growth opportunities for the industry and identifying economic development opportunities. The position provides industry with a single point of contact to assist in operations and growth within the state. The office has been a success and has taken on a far larger role in industry support.

Unlike Ohio, Virginia is home to Boeing, General Dynamics, Northrup Grumman, and Raytheon. Lockheed Martin, with a substantial nexus in Virginia, is based in Maryland. NASA Langley Research is based in Hampton, and NASA has its Wallops Flight Facility causing great expansion of aerospace related jobs and businesses. The United States Navy and the United States Air Force have substantial investment in Virginia with six aircraft carriers based in Norfolk, each supporting 65 plus aircraft. Naval Air Station Oceana is home to seventeen Squadrons. Joint Base Langley is home to the USAF 192nd Operations Group (Virginia Air National Guard) and is the home of the F-22 Raptor. The significance of the Navy, Air Force and other branches relates directly to the need for civilian maintainers, services and suppliers required to support the Nation's air superiority, all from Virginia.



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According to a 2017 study published by the Virginia Department of Aviation, Virginia Aviation represents a “multifaceted set of 18 industries found across the manufacturing, transportation, information, education and public administration sectors.” Total employment at that time was 26,070 and average salaries were \$106,000. These numbers have substantially grown since the study’s publication. Since that time Virginia has been ranked as a national leader in the development of unmanned systems and is a dominant FAA test site for the deployment of unmanned aerial systems (UAS). Virginia has one of the largest concentrations of unmanned businesses in the United States, highlighted by the recent expansion of Drone Up in Virginia Beach.

To further develop this industry sector, it is recommended that a similar position to that in Ohio be created.

OBJECTIVES

Create the position of Special Advisor for Aviation and Aerospace (SAAA) to provide industry with a single point of contact to assist in operations and growth within Virginia.

1. The position would be responsible for acting on behalf of industry to coordinate between all Cabinet level officers and their respective agencies to ensure collaboration and coordination of all activities involved in a business or organizations growth within Virginia.
2. The position will act as a single point of contact for all companies in the aviation and aerospace sectors, with any interaction with state government.
3. The position will identify and seek growth opportunities for the state’s aviation, aerospace, and UAS industries, concentrating on economic development opportunities, workforce education, and work to advance the quality of life for service members and their families.
4. The position will report, twice annually to the Governor, and annually, in November to the legislature on activities of the office relating to its efforts across agencies of state government, agency collaboration and cooperation with the businesses and entities it has served.
5. The position will make policy recommendations that enhance an environment for growth and sustainment of this industry segment in Virginia.

INITIAL COST

Position costs are estimated and will need to include a high-level executive with experience in the aviation and aerospace industry. The position will require support staff and benefits. It is believed that the position can be funded for less than \$500,000 annually.

PROJECT TIMELINE – July 1, 2025